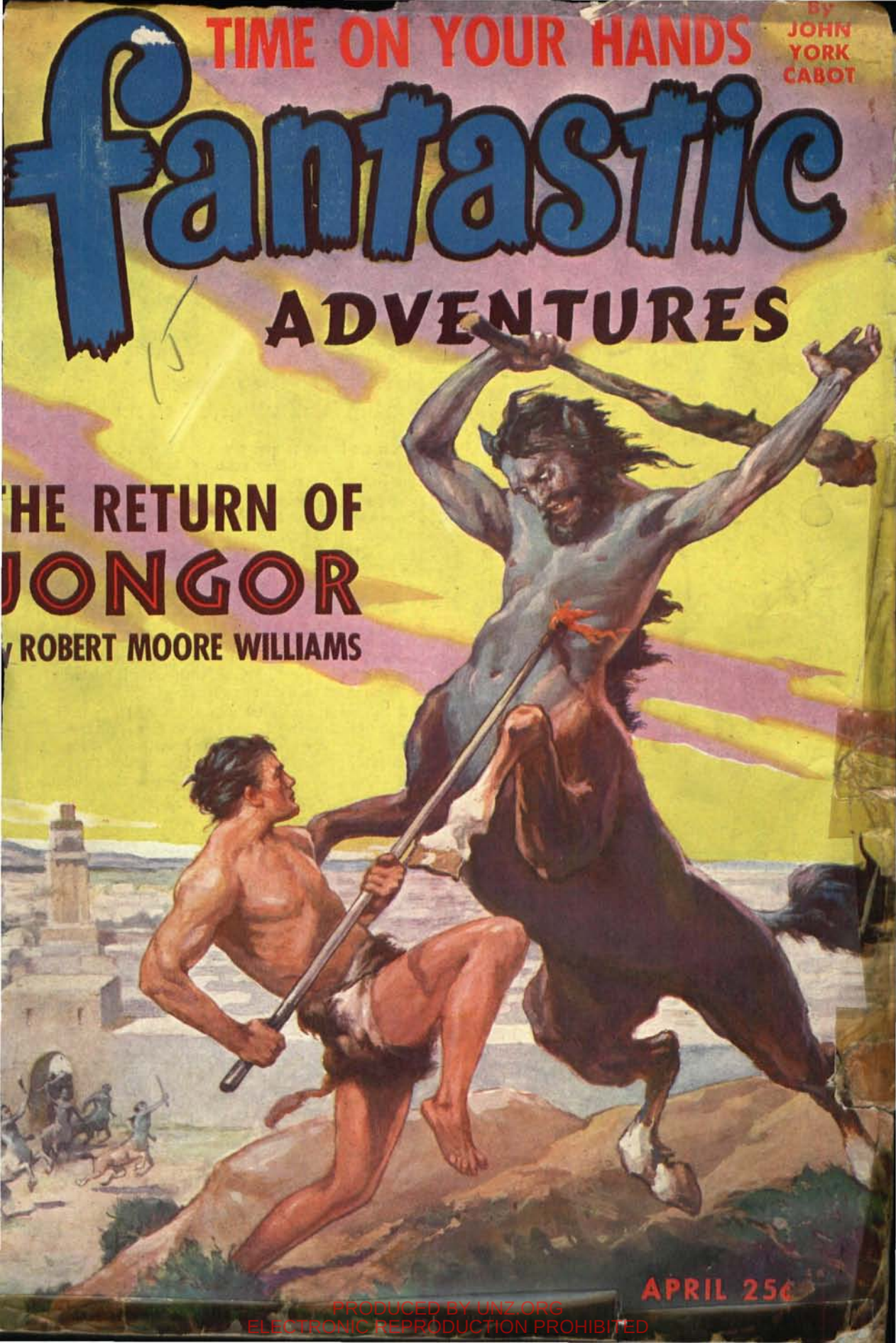
TIME ON YOUR HANDS

By JOHN YORK CABOT

fantastic ADVENTURES



'HE RETURN OF
JONGOR

y ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

APRIL 25¢

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APRIL 1944

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

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Front cover painting by J. Allen St. John, based on the story "The Return of Jonger." Back cover painting by Frank R. Paul, depicting "Jason—The Superman." Illustrations by J. Allen St. John; Virgil Finlay; H. W. McCauley; Robert Fuqua; Malcolm Smith; Arnold Kohn

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APRIL 1944

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VOLUME 6
NUMBER 2

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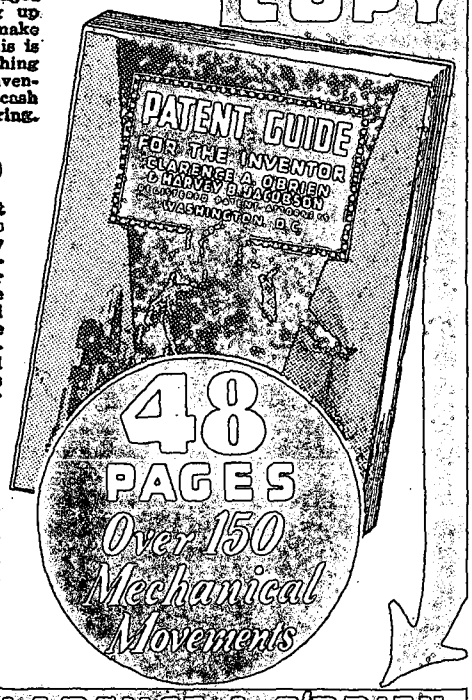

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

THREE and a half years is a long time, but it doesn't seem that long—nor apparently does it seem that long to you readers—since Robert Moore Williams' fine "Jongor of Lost Land" appeared in the October, 1940 issue of *Fantastic Adventures*. *You* haven't forgotten, because you've kept on asking for a new story about Jongor . . . for the last time, because you'll find it in this issue! "The Return of Jongor," we predict, will make even more readers ecstatic than the first of this series did.

WE'RE not making that statement without something to back it up—and therein lies a story that might interest you. In June, 1940, we published what was to be the last issue of *Fantastic Adventures* because apparently it had lost reader support and was no longer worthy of remaining on our list. But your editor, who is an enthusiast beyond compare when it comes to fantasy, begged the front office to put out "just one more issue." (And we added: "just to get rid of some stories in inventory." Now that was a damn lie, and the only time we ever lied to our boss; we hadn't a word in the house! We rushed orders to authors for special stories in order to put out the issue.)

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS was the lad we picked to do the lead. The result was "Jongor of Lost Land." Naturally we picked J. Allen St. John to do the cover for this type story. That was ace-in-the-hole number two. Well, to make a thrilling (to your managing editor!) story short, we *doubled* circulation, and not only that, racked up the highest monthly total for any pulp in the house to that date! Jongor saved *Fantastic Adventures'* life! And in the light of what has happened since, we all owe Mr. Williams a great debt of gratitude.

SO, WHEN we say this yarn is worth your attention, we aren't just shooting off our mouth. But, do we have to tell *you*? It's *you* who have been telling us—for over three years!

WE WONDER if it is coincidence, or just subconscious design that has aided us in giving this new Jongor story a supporting cast that is almost as fantastic as our title? Just cast your eye down this list: P. F. Costello; William P. McGivern; John York Cabot; Robert Bloch; Leroy Yerxa; Berkeley Livingston. If that isn't a star-studded list, you've never seen stars, and you oughta be hit on the head! But that's where this issue *will* hit you.

TAKE "A Horse on Thorndyke" by McGivern for example. You all know what a good job this lad can do on humor, and you ought to be tired of us praising the lad by now; but here's a yarn that just about equals (if not tops) anything Bill has done—and we say that in spite of the fact that Bill himself says: "I labored mightily and brought forth a mess." He labored all right, and the story shows the effort! Frankly, and without our usual "editorial blowing," it's corking good. We laughed out loud a dozen times, and with our paper shortage, that's an accomplishment!

A CABOT story is a rarity these days, and "Time on Your Hands" is appreciated for that reason as well as for just being a Cabot production—which is a synonym for entertainment any old day. We advise you to *take* time to read this one, even if you don't have it on your hands.

"THE CURSE OF EL DORADO" by P. F. Costello is fine action-adventure fantasy, and we don't see how it can miss. Particularly among the more youthful of our readers—and don't begin to mutter, you adults; do you good to kick the kids' gong around once in a while.

LEROY YERXA gives us another entertaining tale in "Freddie Funk's Forgetful Elephant," another story in which the cockeyed little Freddie has some fantastic things happen to him, with purely startling results.

LEFTY FEEP (the old stir-coot!) does another "stretch," if you can call "Time" a prison. (You'll allow us a lousy pun once in a while, won't you?) "Lefty Feep Does Time" is one of the best Feeps in quite a few issues. But why should we even mention it—who can stop you from reading it?

LASTLY, Berkeley Livingston dangles a herring before our dazzled eyes, and we find it looking surprisingly beautiful. Now if you can imagine (before you read the story) how a herring could be beautiful, you win the title of

(Continued on page 8)

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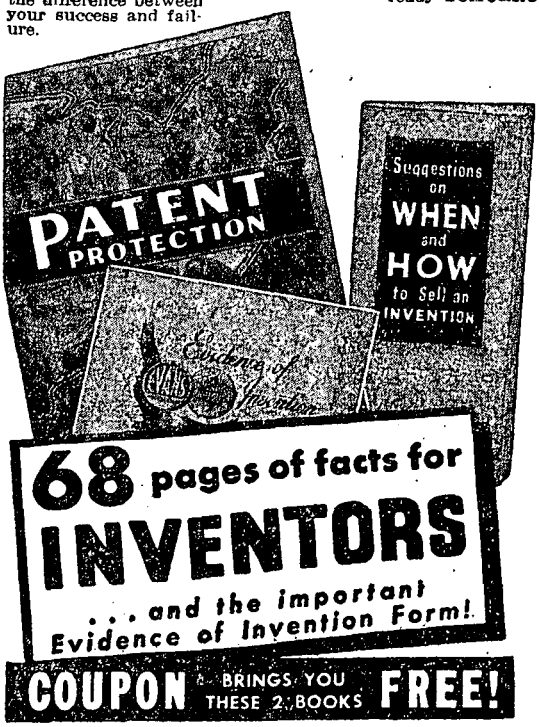

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 6)

"most astute" reader (and undisputed reputation for peeking!). We all should have such a herring!

YOUR editor wants to mention something that has him in a very pleased dither—the number of letters you've been writing him ever since we expanded our "Reader's Page." You very obviously like to read this column as well as the stories themselves. You can take this for fact by just considering that your editor, lazy fellow that he is, could save himself scads of effort by just filling that space with a short story, instead of typing (actually) at least 10,000 words in the process of preparing the letters for publication, and writing the editorial answers to each. That's *work*, you guys and gals! Which proves a lot. But anyway, thanks a million, and keep 'em coming. All this discussion is interesting as all get out.

WE WONDER why we've kept ourselves in restraint this long, but your editor has maintained his "fantastic" reputation by having a baby girl on Christmas day. Now, although we're insufferably proud about this girl (she's a looker, and remarkably smart, and admirably behaved), that isn't what's most interesting—it's more proof that we aren't kidding when we mention that "time machine" we occasionally use to make predictions. As long ago as eight months, we confidently predicted that we would have a baby on Christmas day in the afternoon. The time was 2:37 P.M. In fact, our wife protested mightily when we hiked her off to the hospital. She said it would be days yet. Along about 2:00 she changed her mind. To add to the fantastic element, we were married the previous Christmas afternoon. Now, all we're wondering about is: what to do next Christmas? Got any suggestions?

FOR those of you who read our sister magazine, *Amazing Stories*, and seem to have missed the last issue, Captain Meyer Friedenson won the Hitler Illustration Contest and the $2000 War Bond. We mention this for those of you who wrote in and asked us.

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YOU can always depend on us to give you hot tips on good things, so to follow up the above, here's something that is already sure—and you had better not miss it. David V. Reed, who is one of today's finest authors (and who should know better than you!) will have a 50,000 word novel in the next issue (May—on sale March 10) of *Amazing Stories*. Most of you fantasy readers also read science fiction, and perhaps a lot of you remember his "Empire of Jegga" some months ago. Well, this is just as good, and we want to add that Malcolm Smith has painted the finest space ship cover ever painted (you don't have to believe us until you see it) to illustrate the story. "Murder in Space" will murder you the rest of your life if you fail to read it! You can save yourself a lot of remorse by taking our word.

INSIDE story of the month: Your editor spends a lot of time "snooping" into the affairs of writers, and somewhere along the line he discovered that a top-notch writer sold some fantasy to a New York magazine at what we admit are mighty fine rates. Well, further along the line, the said magazine got new editors, changed its policy, and the fantasy was "out." Now, we know better, so we hastily inveigled them into "salvaging their investment" by buying the stories from their stockpile before they had time to discover their mistake. Very probably we're being egotistic, and we're wrong about *their* policy and its future, but we aren't wrong about *ours!* What's more important, we've gained a new writer—who had never considered us before, but now admits he'll give us more than an occasional thought—which means we'll get our fair share of his manuscripts. Yes, editing is a strange business!

WE HAVEN'T mentioned artists in a long while—well, we still have 'em. This month's cover (you oughta *know* it'd be St. John—after all, he is one of the guys who helped Williams save our lives): We think this one's a fine bit of work and it can't help but help Williams to do it again—only this time we don't need saving, only *more* good stories like this one.

OUR "dele" continues in re: Finlay. One more corker in this issue, illustrating Livingston's "Homer and the Herring." By the way, many

(Concluded on page 10)

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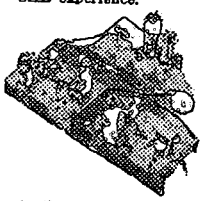

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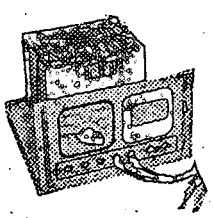

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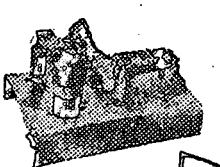

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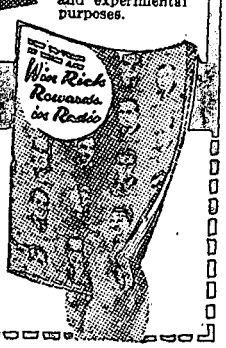

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(Continued from page 8)

thanks for all your kind comments anent our foresight in getting so many illustrations from Finlay before he departed to do battle in the service of his country—and incidentally to prove to a guy named Hitler that there'll be fantasy in the U. S. long after he's fantasy himself.

H. W. McCAULEY returns after a long absence, and it's possible we'll be able to get a few from him from time to time. He's working on a new cover, which will be good news to your ears. What he's told us about it has us itching to see it.

ROBERT FUQUA remains our most faithful artist, and retains his faithful fans as no other artist has. Our newest addition (now on our staff along with Julian Krupa and Malcolm Smith) has gotten a lot of comment on his "character" work. Rod Ruth continues with "Romance of the Elements," and Robert Gibson Jones (lost to us by illness) appears next issue with the last one we have on hand. We sincerely hope he recovers soon—it's been six months now.

ROBERT BLOCH, author of Lefty Feep, can do other things too, as witness his latest triumph on the Kate Smith hour. "Yours Truly, Jack The Ripper" was broadcast. It ran about twelve minutes, starring Laird Creegar of the movies.

ARTHUR T. HARRIS, another of *Fantastic Adventures'* authors, writes us a letter from Ascension Island, where he is now stationed. He speaks with nostalgia of the good old days, and of the time when he'll be back in the more prosaic pulp writing game. Now, now, Art, can it be that a lifetime of espionage and counter-espionage has begun to pall on you? We want you back pulp-writing, of course, and maybe we'll even celebrate your return by putting out a spy story magazine. Anyway, thanks for thinking of us with all that must be on your mind.

DAVID WRIGHT O'BRIEN writes from Utah, where he is teaching waist gunners how to differentiate between the wing and a Nazi plane. He reveals that the other day he took a rookie up, and said rookie promptly proceeded to blow the turret door off and also tried to blow Dave along with it! The rookie turned with a grin and said: "Sumpin' musta gone wrong, huunnhh?".

DAVE passes along the word that William P. McGivern has been transferred to the air force, and at the present time may be peering over the rail of a transport hoping a Nazi sub will appear so he can throw an empty scotch bottle at it. Which is more truth than poetry! That guy sure makes a soldier!

DO YOU believe in dreams? What about racial memory? Is there anything in reincarnation? What about forecasting the future—can some of us really do it? Ever hear of people "remembering" a past or a place they themselves could not possibly have experienced or visited? What is a "hunch"? Where do we get ideas? What makes us "invent"?

WE LIKE to puddle around in such things and try to find the answer. Well, the other night we dreamed an answer that we want to pass on, because it's so darned logical, and it seems to fit all the foregoing questions. You know, of course, of the law of physics which says matter and (or) energy cannot be destroyed, only changed? Well, why not apply that reasoning to still another axiomatic statement (which after all is something we accept without proof)? Here's the new axiom: "Nothing in human experience is ever lost; it all goes into a central well, the well of dreams, from which we may draw upon the memories of those who have gone before us."

THINK about that for awhile. Doesn't it provide an answer to all those questions? Isn't it the common denominator to all the questions that have plagued us for centuries? Many of us dream regularly; some of us can even dream by design: i.e., can dream what we want to dream. Some of us can dream "serial dreams" with an unbroken continuity. How many of us have had a knotty problem solve itself automatically during a dream and wake up with the answer handed to us on a golden platter? What about day-dreaming? Isn't that deliberate dreaming? And haven't you ever startled yourself with the unexpected results of such a pastime?

YOUR editor has written many salable stories written at the behest of a dream inspiration. What about those plots that pop into authors' heads and finally become finished stories? The idea of a physical law stating that nothing in *human* experience is ever lost is startling, and the word human brings something else to mind that you readers might help us check. Have any of you ever dreamed of *being* an animal? Not just the usual nightmare of growing a tail, or hoofs, or jackass ears—but actually becoming an animal entity? We never have, and we dream every night. But we *have* been other human beings in dreams. We'd be interested in knowing if this is true in your case too!

BY NOW you ought to have had enough of your editor's chatter, so we'll give this column the usual three-letter ending. *Rap.*

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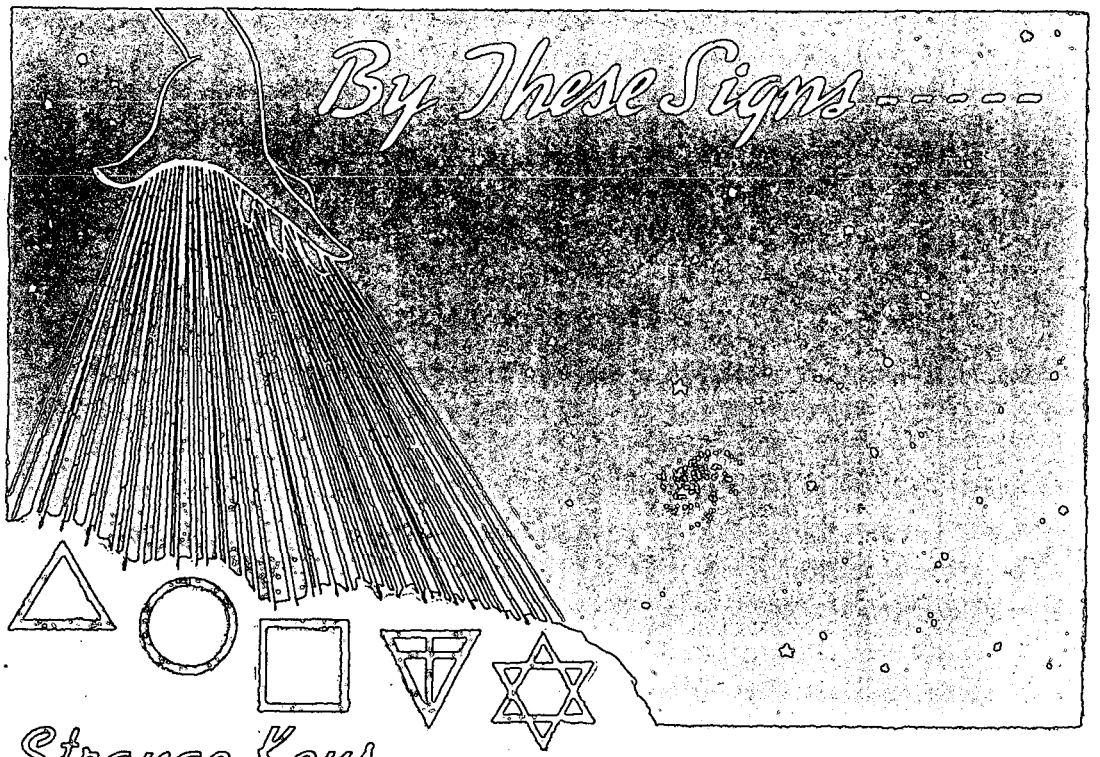

Strange Keys to the Powers of the Universe

"GOD GEOMETRIZES," said an ancient sage. Within the straight line, curve, and angle—and their combinations—exist the forces of creation. These *secret symbols* contain the mysterious laws of the universe. Upon their right use—or the neglect of them—the success or failure of every *human enterprise* depends.

Have you a desire, *something you wish to accomplish* in life? Put your finger on a dot. In whatever direction you move your finger from the dot, you have made a beginning. Thus a dot is the symbol of *one*—or a beginning. Your desire then is also symbolized by *one*. If you follow the *proper method* or way to accomplish what you want, you have arrived at point *two*. Whenever these two symbols are brought together—the idea and the right way—you produce point *three*—the success of your plan. Success, therefore, is symbolized by the three equal sides of a *triangle*.

In planning your personal affairs—business, domestic, or the welfare of your family—do you use a *Cosmic formula*? Do you determine whether your acts are in accord with Divine truths eternally expressed in symbols? Why does the circle represent completion? Why is it said that a man is on the square? These symbols are used by astronomers and scientists to prove the physical laws of the universe—why don't you apply them to the problems of your everyday world? Learn what symbols, as powers and forces of nature, you can simply and intelligently use in directing the course of your life.

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The RETURN of JONGOR

By ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

From the depths of a water-hole came a mysterious message that took Jongor into his greatest adventure

"SH!" Jongor said.

Behind him, Ann and Alan Hunter were suddenly silent.

Jongor bent again over the jungle pool. Ann Hunter and her brother watched. It was the hour of dusk. The three, searching for water, had found this pool. As they approached it to drink, Jongor had suddenly held them back. With all the cautious alertness he displayed in stalking a dangerous enemy, he had approached the pool, then had knelt beside it. Staring with fixed gaze at the water, he knelt there now.

To the casual eye, it was a perfectly ordinary pool of water. Formed by a small stream that trickled down the side of the mountain, it was not over four feet in width, and in the deepest place the water was not two feet in depth. Silver flashes in the water showed where a school of minnows was playing and tracks at the edge revealed that small animals had come here to drink. The pool did not look dangerous.

Jongor could not have watched it more intently if it had harbored his deadliest enemy.

"What is he doing?" Ann Hunter fidgeted.

"Keep quiet, sis," Alan Hunter answered. "I don't know what he's doing, but I'm willing to bet *he* knows."

The girl did not much like to be told to keep quiet, but she obeyed. Ann Hunter was no longer the spoiled socialite who had penetrated this Australian wilderness in search of her brother. The jungle of Lost Land had changed her. Her hair was no longer done in the latest style. It was bobbed short. The jungle does not tolerate long hair. Her nails were no longer manicured and polished, her hands white, her complexion the perfect product of the best beauty salons, her clothes the most expensive creations of the exclusive Fifth Avenue shops. She had been too long in the jungle for any of the frills of civilization to survive. Her dress was a short skirt, much mended and patched; her shoes were moccasins that Jongor himself had made from deer skin, her skin was sun brown, and her face had begun to show signs of freckles. Now she looked, and was, fit; and the light rifle she carried in the crook of her arm made her look like a huntress from some long-lost dawn world, a huntress who had somehow managed to obtain a modern weapon.

"Look!" the girl whispered, pointing to the pool. "What's happening

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From behind the shelter of the great neck Jongor launched his arrows

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to the surface of that water?"

Jongor still knelt beside the pool. His keen, jungle-trained ears must have caught the girl's whisper, but he gave no indication that he had heard. His attention was concentrated on the water.

The pool was changing. The clear water was turning black. Jongor had not touched or in any way disturbed the water but a black film was spreading over the surface of the pool.

"Jongor! What is it?" the girl asked.

"Shut up, sis," Alan Hunter hissed. "Don't bother him. He knows what he is doing." There was a touch of awe in the youth's voice. He trusted Jongor implicitly, but he never could quite forget the strangeness of the black-haired, gray-eyed giant kneeling beside the pool. To Alan Hunter, Jongor was a strange man.* But what was happening to the pool was stranger even than Jongor.

THE blackness was continuing to grow. It was coming from no apparent source but it was spreading over the surface of the water. The pool was beginning to look like ink. Alan Hunter watched uneasily. Jongor did not move a muscle. Coming from somewhere far distant in the jungle, the youth heard a thin babble of sound, like many voices raised in a shouted chorus. It died quickly. There was no other sound.

Streaks of light began to appear on the black surface of the pool. To Alan Hunter, the streaks of light looked a little like heat-lightning dancing across the face of a far-distant thunder cloud on a summer night. He caught himself listening for the rumble of thunder far away, then shrugged the fantasy aside. The surface of the pool was not a thunder storm in miniature, even if it did look like that. He wondered what it really was. Ordinary jungle pools did not turn black and streaks of light did not dance across their surface.

Again the youth was aware of the babble of sound in the distance. It was gone before he was sure he heard it. He turned his attention back to the pool.

Abruptly the flashes of light stopped appearing. In a split second, the blackness vanished from the surface of the pool. The clear, sparkling water was again revealed. In the depths the school of minnows came out of their

* See *Jongor of Lost Land*, in the October, 1940, issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, Jongor was the son of Capt. Robert Gordon, one-time U. S. Naval aviator, who, with his bride, had attempted to fly over that vast expanse of western Australia desert country where Lost Land is located. Here, in a huge valley hidden away behind high mountains, the world of hundreds of thousands of years ago still exists. Here the dinosaurs have survived, as have the pterodactyls, those winged dragon lizards of antiquity, and other savage beasts of the days when the earth was young. Lost Land is surrounded by mountains. The mountains in turn are surrounded by deserts, thus making exploration almost impossible.

Capt. Robert Gordon's plane was smashed in a forced landing as he tried to fly over Lost Land. He and his bride escaped from the crash alive but they found escape from the country impossible. Here a son was born to them. They named him John. John's first babyish efforts to pronounce his name had resulted in "Jon-Gor." He could say no more than that. So "Jongor," he became to his adoring parents. When Jongor was twelve years old, the pterodactyls killed his father and mother. He was left alone in Lost Land, in a country where danger lurked in the movement of every twig, where death waited beside every water hole. The boy managed to survive and has grown into a black-haired giant of a man.

Alan Hunter, a youth in search of adventure, also managed to penetrate Lost Land. He was lost there, and Ann, his sister, had put off her gay social life in New York to go to this wild country in search of him. She finds Jongor and Jongor finds Alan. The three are on their way out of Lost Land when the present story opens.

—Ed.

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hiding place and began again to play. Whatever had happened, it was finished. Jongor was rising to his feet.

"What was that, Jongor?" Ann Hunter asked.

The face of the giant was grave. "A message," he said.

"A message?" the startled girl echoed.

Jongor smiled at her. "That was the water writing of Queen Nesca," he explained. His eyes were thoughtful. He did not realize that Ann and Alan Hunter would not understand what he had said. Because he knew what had happened, he assumed they would also know.

"Queen Nesca!" Ann Hunter gasped. "Water writing! What are you talking about? I—I——" At a loss for words, she hesitated.

"I'm sorry," Jongor quickly apologized. "I had forgotten you did not know about Queen Nesca. I will try to explain. Queen Nesca wished to send me a message. She wrote it on water, knowing that no matter where I was, the next time I approached a pool of water, the message would appear before me on the surface of the liquid." Again the giant smiled at her. "Now do you understand?" he questioned.

The girl stared at him in bewilderment. His explanation only added to her confusion. If he had said the message had been sent by a special kind of radio that transmitted its radiations through water instead of through ether, she might have grasped an inkling of his meaning. "Water writing?" she whispered. "That—that——" She intended to say that water writing was impossible but she caught herself before the words were uttered. She had seen too many things happen in Lost Land that she had thought were impossible, to say that water writing could not be done. After all, she had seen it happen. "But—" she protested.

"I don't get it either," Alan Hunter interrupted. "Sweet Pete, Jongor, did those funny flashes of light spell out a code of some kind?"

JONGOR nodded. He saw the confusion of the two. "I will try to explain," he said. The thoughtful look persisted on his face. "Queen Nesca and I are friends. Very good friends. Once, in Lost Land, I was trapped by the teros.* I would not have been able to escape from those terrible birds if Queen Nesca had not come to my rescue. She saved my life, and after that, I went with her to her country, which lies in the southern section of Lost Land. There, from the lips of the Queen, I learned about water writing."

He paused. Ann and Alan Hunter listened intently.

"When Nesca wishes to send a message to me, she goes to the place that her people call the temple of the water god," Jongor continued. "In this temple there is a small pool of black water. Surrounding the pool are many strange instruments invented and operated by the wise men of her race. I never did understand how these devices operated, although Nesca explained it to me many times. All I could understand was that she sets the devices in operation. Then she writes her message on the pool of black water. No matter where I am, when next I approach water, or even when I lift a cup of water to my lips, the message will appear before me on the surface of the liquid. Nesca's peo-

* Teros.—This was the name Jongor had given to the pterodactyls, those immense flying reptiles whose fossil remains are still found in many places on earth. They are extinct everywhere except in Lost Land.—Ed.

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ple use water writing as a method of communicating with each other. Now do you understand?" Jongor ended.*

There was doubt on the faces of both of them.

"Queen Nesca must rule a very intelligent people," Alan Hunter said slowly.

"They call themselves Arklans," Jongor answered. "And they say the Arklans are the oldest and the wisest race on earth."

"Modest creatures, aren't they?" Alan Hunter said, laughing. "I still don't understand all you've told us, but if it's all right with you, it's all right with me. The important thing is, I'm as thirsty as a couple of camels, and if Queen Nesca's water writing hasn't poisoned that pool or something, I'd like to take a drink. What say, Jongor, did the message from your lady friend poison the pool?"

The giant grinned. "Not at all," he said. "The water is perfectly good. Have a drink."

Alan Hunter knelt beside the pool and began to drink. Ann did not move.

"Aren't you thirsty too?" Jongor said to her.

"I'm thirsty but I can wait," the girl answered. "D—did I understand you to say that those flashes of light on that pool were a message from this Queen Nesca?"

"Yes," Jongor answered.

"What was the message?" the girl asked quickly. She spoke so bluntly that Jongor was a little startled. He looked at her. She blushed furiously.

"It's not that I'm trying to pry," she hastily explained. "Your business is your business, I'm sure——"

"Why, Ann, you're blushing!" Jongor gasped.

"I'm not!" she hotly denied.

"But you are," the giant insisted.

"Well, what if I am?" she snapped.

Jongor stared at her in hurt surprise. Other than his mother, this was the first girl he had ever met. He did not understand them. Quite obviously she was angry with him. "Did—did I say something that hurt your feelings?" he asked. "I—I didn't mean to— What's wrong, Ann? Did I do anything wrong?"

She didn't answer.

Alan Hunter looked up from the pool where he was drinking. "Don't mind sis," he said to the perturbed giant. "She's just jealous. That's all that's wrong with her."

"You keep out of this!" Ann snapped at her brother.

Alan grinned impishly.

"Jealous?" Jongor questioned. "I do not understand. What does being jealous mean?"

"In this case it means that you got a message from a lady-friend and Ann doesn't like it," Alan gravely explained. "It also means that she is dying to know what was in that message—— Hey, sis, don't throw that big rock at me."

Ann had picked up a handful of pebbles and was bombarding her brother with them. "I told you to keep out of this," she said hotly.

"I wasn't doing anything," her brother defended.

"You keep your big mouth shut." She reached for another handful of pebbles but Alan quickly retreated to

* The secret of this water writing remains unknown, but the suggestion has been made that the instruments in the temple of the water god were really radio transmitters of an unusual kind. Inasmuch as Jongor had no receiving set, but still was able, upon approaching water, to receive the message intended for him, psychic forces must also have been involved, in effect amounting to a kind of mental radio. Water writing was an ingenious invention, but because transmission was one-way, with no means provided so the receiver could answer a message, it was not a very effective method of communication.—Ed.

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the shelter of a tree. Jongor regarded the pair with tolerant amusement. The look of amusement faded from his face when peace was restored and Alan, coming out from behind the tree, said, "Sis probably had a good idea after all, Jongor. What *was* in that message from your lady friend?"

The giant looked perturbed. "The message?" he faltered. Obviously he did not want to talk.

"Of course, if it was something private——" Alan hinted. "If it was an invitation to resume your love-life, naturally you don't need to tell us—— Hey, you aren't listening!"

The thin babble of distant sound that Alan had twice heard while Jongor knelt beside the pool came again. The first two times it had come Jongor had been too intent on Queen Nesca's message for the sound to register on his consciousness. This time it did register. A startled look appeared on his face.

"I heard that noise before," Alan said. "What is it, Jongor?"

"Blackfellows!" the giant answered.

"Blackfellows!" Ann Hunter gasped. Blackfellows was the term applied to the savage aborigines who haunted the fringe of Lost Land. She knew too well what the word meant. In entering this country she had had to fight her way through these same savages. "Are they near?" she whispered.

Jongor did not answer. An arrow notched on the string of his great bow, he was already slipping silently across the little glade in the direction from which the sound had come. "You two wait here for me," he flung back over his shoulder.

As quietly as the movement of a shadow, he slipped away into the jungle dusk.

"Jongor! Wait!" Ann called hastily. There was no answer.

CHAPTER II

The Blackfellows

"HE PROBABLY went rushing off to keep a date with his girl friend," Alan Hunter said.

"He did not!" Ann said hotly. "He went to scout those savages."

"Why should he go hunting them?" her brother asked. "Jongor can whip a hundred Blackfellows. He isn't worried about them. The thing that got him all hot and bothered was this message from Queen Nesca. Boy! Would I like to fall in with one of these queens! Some dusky beauty—— Hey, where are you going?"

The girl had turned and was walking away. Night was swiftly falling. Before Alan quite realized what was happening, she was out of sight.

"Hey, Ann!" he yelled. "Come back here. You know better than to go chasing around in this country after dark."

She did not answer.

"Ann!" Alan shouted. "I was only teasing you. Can't you take a little kidding?"

There was a note of panic in his voice. He knew that Ann was head over heels in love with Jongor, and, like all brothers everywhere, he could not resist teasing her about it. He did not expect her to get mad and go stalking off into the darkness, at least not when the Blackfellows were known to be in the vicinity.

"Ann, you idiot!" he called. "Come back here."

The only sound that came to his straining ears was the thin babble of the savages in the distance. They were holding some kind of a celebration off there somewhere in the night. He could hear a ragged chant rising on the soft night wind. Ann did not answer.

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He started after her. Crossing the little glade, he plunged into the edge of the jungle. Ann had not gone far. He called again, softly now. She would get over her huff in a few minutes and would answer him. Anyhow she had her rifle and would be in no danger. Alan had lost his own gun months before in Lost Land and he was armed with a heavy spear that Jongor had given him. He called again.

Crash!

The sharp bang of her rifle split the night.

Then—silence.

Alan Hunter saw the flash of the gun. He could not see what she had shot at.

"Ann! Are you all right?" he called softly.

He waited for her to answer. The night was still. Perhaps she had shot at an animal, maybe at a shadow. If she was in danger, she would shoot again. She knew how to handle a gun and she had been long enough in the jungle to know danger when she saw it. Alan was not particularly worried. She knew how to take care of herself.

Suddenly she screamed.

Crash! The gun thundered again. This time it was fired wildly into the air.

"Look out, Alan!" she screamed.

As thought it were shut off by a hand closing quickly around her throat, the scream shuddered abruptly into silence. Alan started toward her.

Swish!

He heard the sound but he did not see the missile. The swishing sound came from a heavy club thrown through the air. It struck him on the back of his head. Stars exploded before his eyes. As he crashed to the ground he was vaguely aware of an excited gibbering in the jungle around him. The gibbering went into silence as consciousness abruptly faded out.

ALAN HUNTER regained consciousness to the accompaniment of a splitting pain in the back of his head. There was another and even more torturing pain localized somewhere in the region of his shoulder blades. With the vague memory of being hit on the head, he knew he should have a headache but the pain around his shoulder blades he could not understand at all. He was not yet completely conscious. Then he opened his eyes. And realized why his shoulders hurt.

His arms were tied behind his back. He was sitting flat on the ground, his feet thrust out in front of him. There was a stake at his back. His arms were tied to this.

Twenty feet in front of him, so near that he could feel the heat, a fire was burning. There were four fires, he vaguely saw, but the one in front of him held his attention. Wood was being piled on it. The fire was growing in size, was becoming hotter. When it died down to a bed of coals it would make a first class fire in which to roast a sizzling steak.

Figures were dancing around the fire. Fuzzy-headed figures. They were carrying shields, spears, clubs. They were shrieking a wild, barbaric chant that rose and fell and rose again in a kind of erratic rhythm.

What makes here, Alan vaguely wondered. He was still a little dazed. His memory had not completely returned.

"Oh, God——" a voice whispered near him.

He turned his head. To his right, there was another fire. The blaze of this fire was already dying down to a bed of glowing coals. There was a

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stake driven into the ground in front of the fire.

To the stake a man was tied. It was this man that Alan had heard groan.

"Oh, God——" he groaned again.

Several of the dancers detached themselves from the main group and ran to the man. Alan thought they were going to release him, to help him, perhaps offer him a drink of water. Instead they began jabbing him with their spears.

The man screamed at the top of his voice.

The natives jabbed him again. They took care not to thrust the spears in too deeply—their purpose was not to kill—but each time they thrust at him with the sharp-pointed weapons, they drew blood.

"Why don't you kill me and have it over with?" the man screamed. He lunged at his tormentors, trying to break free, and the stout stake to which he was tied shook from his efforts. It did not pull out of the ground and the bonds binding his arms behind him did not break. The Blackfellows regarded his efforts with great interest, and Alan got the impression they were half-hoping he would manage to pull up the stake and break free. Then they would have the pleasure of running him down.

"Go on and kill me," the man begged.

The natives laughed at him.

"Shut up, Morton!" a heavy voice said.

BY CRANING his neck, Alan could see another stake. A second man was tied to it. It was this second man who had spoken. "The more you rave and carry on, the more they like it," this second man continued. "Don't you see that they want you to scream? That's why they're torturing you—so they can have the pleasure of listening to your yells."

"But they're going to kill us and eat us," Morton groaned. "I tell you, Schiller, they're going to roast us in those fires and eat us!"

"What of it?" Schiller said imperturbably. "Living here between the desert and the mountains the way they do, they never have a chance to get a full stomach. This is probably the first opportunity any of them ever had for a square meal."

"D—don't talk like that!" Morton begged.

"The trouble with you is, you haven't got any guts," Schiller said. "Now shut your mouth, you dirty yellow dog, and die like the man you're not."

Morton's groans subsided to gasping sobs. The firelight revealed tears running down his cheeks. The savages, laughing, went back to the dance around the fires.

Alan Hunter turned his head to one side and retched. He knew now what had happened and what was going to happen. The Blackfellows had caught him. Somehow they had managed to catch two other white men. They were going to eat the three. The only ray of comfort in Alan Hunter's life at that moment was the knowledge that Ann had escaped. The Blackfellows hadn't caught her. She had a gun and she could fight them off until Jongor came. She might have to hide in the jungle for a while but Jongor would find and rescue her.

Ann had escaped!

He had teased her and she had gone stalking off into the jungle. Because of that, she would live. It awed him a little to think on what a strange twist of fate her safety had depended. If he hadn't teased her——

Not until then did he fully realize there were four fires.

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The Blackfellows had built a fire for each victim. There were only three men to be sacrificed. Who was the fourth fire for?

Alan was at one end of the line. Then came Morton, then Schiller. The a fourth fire was at the far end.

He craned his neck, caught a glimpse of a stake driven into the ground, saw a figure slumped against that stake.

Ann!

The Blackfellows had caught her! She hadn't escaped!

CHAPTER III

The Monster from the Night

MORTON was praying again. The man was hysterical. As the fires died down to beds of hot coals, his hysteria increased. Schiller was cursing him in a dull monotone.

"Shut up, damn you!" Morton screamed.

Oddly, as though Morton's sudden defiance somehow frightened him, Schiller did shut up.

Alan Hunter worked with the rawhide things which had been used to the his hands together. He felt them give a little and his heart leaped with hope. If he could get his hands free——Then what? There were at least a hundred of the savages. Even with his hands free, he wouldn't stand a chance and he knew it. But he kept trying. He could work only when he was certain he was unobserved, and, worst of all, he could not see what he was doing.

His only real hope was that Jongor would somehow come and rescue them. He had an amazing amount of confidence in that gray-eyed jungle giant, but he also knew that Jongor was no superman. Jongor could work miracles. In a fair fight, Jongor could whip twenty of these scrawny Blackfellows, and not raise a sweat doing it, but even Jongor could not whip a hundred of them. Alan Hunter kept working, trying to free his arms.

The moon had risen.

The fires were hot furnaces of coals. There was little flame in them, but much heat.

The Blackfellows had stopped their dancing and were busying themselves in drawing the beds of coals into the proper position for roasting.

"Oh, God——" Morton moaned.

The Blackfellow turned to their victims. Groups ran to each stake. Jabbering excitedly, they began untying the rawhide thongs.

Thrrrummm!

Hissss!

Spat!

The three sounds followed each other so rapidly that they were almost indistinguishable. The first sound came from the surrounding fringe of jungle. The last sound came from a Blackfellow who was eagerly loosing the thong that held Ann Hunter to the stake. It was caused by an arrow striking him in the chest and driving so deeply into his body that only the feathered tip showed.

The savage clutched at the arrow. He was dead already, but he didn't know it yet. He tried to pull the arrow from his body. His legs sagged out from under him. He fell flat on his face and did not move after he touched the ground.

The arrow had come so quickly that even the natives did not fully realize what was happening. The first impression of most of them was that their comrade had been struck down by some angry god. There was an instant of silence.

Thrrrummm!

Again the bowstring throbbed in the darkness. A feathered shaft lanced

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through the dim firelight, spatted viciously as it drove into the body of another native.

This time the Blackfellows realized what was happening. Somebody, hidden in the darkness, was shooting arrows at them! It was not a god who was striking them dead. It was an enemy with a bow. They knew how to deal with an enemy

Brandishing their spears they ran toward the spot from which the arrows had come.

"Run, Jongor!" Ann Hunter screamed. "There are too many of them for you to fight."

She knew the source from which those arrows came. Jongor! Mighty Jongor was out there in the darkness. The knowledge that he was out there trying to save them lit a burning flame of hope in her heart. But even as she knew he was there, she also knew there were too many Blackfellows for him to overcome alone. He might kill a few of them, but he just didn't have a chance against the whole tribe. They were certain to pull him down in the end, no matter how well he fought. She called to him to run, to save himself.

Answering her, another arrow came out of the darkness.

A FURIOUS yell went up from the savages. They did not know who was shooting at them, but from the fact that the arrows came one by one, they suspected there was only one man out there in the night. It would give them much pleasure to pull one man down, to drive another stake into the ground, to build another roaring fire and dance around it while it died down to a bed of coals. They screamed their defiance.

Answering screams came back from the night. Out there somewhere in the darkness a mighty voice was yelling.

"Move, thou cousin to the snake!" the voice screamed. "Move, I say. Get thy lumbering carcass into action, thou mountain of worm food, before I beat thy scaly hide off thy bony back."

The voice changed its tone. "Run, little one," it said pleadingly. "Run very fast. Run straight toward those bright lights that you see ahead of us. Do not be afraid of the fires. I won't let them harm you. Run, little one. *Run!*"

Something snorted in the night. There was a tremendous crashing of branches. Trees began to shake.

The horde of savages suddenly stopped their charge toward the jungle.

"Run, little one," the voice spoke again. "Be a nice little boy and run very fast."

The answering snort came again.

Knocking shrubs to the right and left, something burst from the wall of the jungle. It tossed a huge head upward, saw the fires, and tried to draw back.

"Thou monstrous mountain of chicken-hearts!" a voice shouted. "Shy away from those fires and I will beat thy thimbleful of brains out. Charge, I say! The fires will not hurt thee. I will not let them. *Charge!*"

There was a series of loud whacks, as of a club striking a bony back.

The beast snorted. It charged toward the fires. The very ground shook as it rumbled forward.

"God help us!" Morton shouted. "It's the devil himself come after us."

"Shut up!" Schiller hissed at him. "Whatever that thing is, it's come to help us."

The enraged screams of the Blackfellows had died into abrupt silence as the beast fought its way clear of the jungle growth. They got a good look at it. It was twice as tall as a man. It was as big as a hundred men. The

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thing must have weighed tons. The ground shook as it lunged forward.

The Blackfellows were savage fighters. They would not have run from the devil himself. Ann Hunter, who had seen them charge the death-dealing guns of the white man, knew they were reckless fighters who would face death without faltering.

They faced this monster who had come at them out of the jungle night.

"Tear them to pieces, little one," the voice came again. "Trample them into the dirt."

Snorting, the beast came forward.

"By God! It's a dinosaur!" Schiller shouted. There was incredulous, stupefied amazement in his voice. When the beast had come out of the jungle he had not known what it was. Now, as it came forward out of the shadow of the trees and into the moonlight, he got a good look at it.

There was no questioning what he saw. It was a dinosaur.

Startling as was that fact, there was something even more startling.

The monster had a rider! Riding on the beast's broad back was about the biggest white man he had ever seen! It was this man whose voice they had heard from the jungle.

Like a circus performer, he was standing erect on the dinosaur's back. In his left hand was a huge bow.

Thrrrumm! Thrrrumm! Thrrrum!

Arrow after arrow was leaping from the bow-string, straight into the mass of savages.

Each time he loosed an arrow, the rider yelled at the top of his voice.

"Give 'em hell, Yale."

JONGOR was riding the dinosaur. Jongor had never been within ten thousand miles of Yale. Alan Hunter had taught him the yell. He was using it now. It was a splendid way to make noise. Jongor knew that noise was as effective a weapon against the Blackfellows as his arrows. Noise would frighten them.

Jongor knew he had to scare them into running. There were too many of them for him to fight, even with the help of the dinosaur. One well-aimed spear, one thrown club, would tumble him off the monster's back. If that happened, the dinosaur would run away, and he would be swept down by a horde of yelling savages.

He was counting on the sudden appearance of the dinosaur putting fear into the hearts of the Blackfellows. Living on the desert fringe of Lost Land, never quite daring to penetrate the mountains and enter the hidden country itself, they had never seen a dinosaur. Or he hoped they hadn't.

Just the sight of one of the beasts ought to scare the wits out of them.

Yelling at the top of his voice, he forced the dinosaur to charge the savages.

They didn't run!

They wavered, started to draw back. Then their chief, screaming that they were mangy cowards who deserved to be fed to yellow dogs, leaped out in front of the mass. Yelling at them to follow him, he charged the dinosaur. The savage chieftain had a heavy spear. He didn't throw it recklessly. He had seen the rider on the back of the dinosaur, had guessed that the rider was all they really had to fear.

He intended to get the rider.

Jongor coolly notched an arrow. He saw the chief, he knew the chief saw him. The dinosaur and the native, running toward each other, were rapidly closing the gap between them. Jongor suspected that the native planned to wait until the dinosaur was almost upon him, then leap to one side and hurl his spear.

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If all the natives should adopt this simple ruse—dodge the lumbering monster and cast their spears at its rider—Jongor knew that he would shortly resemble a large pin-cushion stuck full of heavy pins. He had to get that Blackfellow big-shot. Arrow on bowstring, he waited. Out of the corners of his eyes he saw the fires, the stakes, and the victims tied to the stakes.

One victim was yelling at the top of his voice.

"Give 'em hell, Jongor! Tear 'em to pieces! Mow 'em down!"

That was Alan Hunter yelling.

The two men tied to stakes next to Alan, Jongor did not know, but he knew the person tied to the last stake in the line. Ann! He also knew what would happen to her if he failed to smash these blacks.

"Run quickly, little one," he said softly.

The dinosaur snorted, lunged forward.

At the last possible moment, the native chief darted to one side. His spear arm went back, ready to cast the weapon. Up to thirty or forty yards, the natives could throw their spears with deadly accuracy. At this range the chief simply could not miss.

A GASP went up from the hundreds of watching Blackfellows. Their chief knew how to fight this monster out of the night. Their chief was not afraid. At that moment they were very proud of their chief, and once he demonstrated that the lumbering beast could be speared, they would be very eager to fight at his side. They watched his arm go back to cast the spear.

Thrrum!

The native chieftan's naked black chest suddenly sprouted another barbaric ornament. A bit of straight stick with a feathered end. It stuck out very stiffly from his chest.

Jongor's arrow! He, also, had waited until the last possible moment, until the native drew back his arm to cast the spear. In the split second when he was in the act of throwing, he would not be able to dodge.

Jongor had waited. The arrow had gone home.

The spear fell from a suddenly nerveless hand. A scream bubbled from the chieftain's lips, sank abruptly into silence as he fell. For an instant, he flopped on the ground, then was still.

A gasp of horror rose from the watching Blackfellows. Their chief, their mighty man of war, the strongest among them, had fallen. Fear suddenly struck them. If the chief could not win, how could they, who were less mighty than he, hope to overcome this monster of the night? As they shrank back in fear, their ears were suddenly assailed by hideous yells.

"Give 'em hell, Yale!"

The yells were coming from the giant who rode the mighty beast. They were being echoed by one of their victims, tied to the stake. Like the shriek of some doughty battle-cry, the yells echoed in the night.

The death of their chief the natives might have withstood. They might not have faltered under the charge of the dinosaur. But the death of their chieftan was just when he was about to be victorious, the snorts of the terrible looking beast, the earth-shaking thunder of its feet, and this mad battle-cry, were too much for their nerves.

They broke and ran.

Jongor was among them! Now, when they were breaking, was the time to punish them, the time to scatter them, the time to drive them into panic-stricken flight. If they had time to think, they might realize that all they

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had to do was to spear the rider of the beast. Jongor had no intention of giving them time to think. Bow-string humming its song of death, he drove the dinosaur among them. Some of the less fortunate ones were crushed beneath its feet. Their screams, added to the yells, made the night hideous with noise.

The Blackfellows ran to the protection of the jungle. Jongor followed them even there. He drove them before him, forced them to run as they had never run before. Only when he was certain they were so scared they would never think of returning to this spot did he go back to the fires, release the victims from the stakes.

"Thank you," Ann Hunter said. "The ——"

She had intended to be cool and calm. Instead she fainted in Jongor's arms.

"Is she all right?" the perturbed giant questioned. "Has she been harmed?"

"She's only fainted," her brother answered. "Heck, girls are like that. Think nothing of it. She'll be all right in a few minutes. For that matter, I felt like fainting myself when you came out of that jungle yelling, 'Give 'em hell, Yale.'"

"It was the only thing I could think of at the moment," Jongor admitted. "I remember you telling me that it was a battle-cry used in America."

"We never used it like *that!*" Alan Hunter grinned. "I never had a hope you would find us, or be able to save us if you did discover what had happened."

"You need not thank me," Jongor answered. "Thank my little friend here." He nodded toward the dinosaur. The great beast was sniffing warily at the beds of hot coals. Fire was something new in its experience. "He thinks the fires will eat him up," Jongor said. He slapped the mighty monster familiarily on the foreleg. "Have no fear, little one. I will protect you from the bright hot stuff. Great fool! You must not stick your nose in it."

The dinosaur had sniffed too closely at the hot coals. In consequence it had gotten its nose singed. It hastily thrust its long head toward Jongor.

Jongor patted the burned place. "Great fool!" he said gently. "There, there," Jongor soothed it.

SCHILLER and Morton were silent, awed spectators to this little scene. Jongor had cut the thongs that bound them to the stakes. Then, in his concern with Ann, he had forgotten them. They watched him pet the dinosaur.

"He's talkin' to that thing!" Morton gasped. "He treats it like it was a big cat of some kind. He acts like it was a pet!"

Jongor looked over his shoulder at the two men. "It *is* a pet," he said.

"You talk as if that beast understands you," Schiller said.

"It *does* understand me," Jongor answered.

Morton backed hastily away. A man who said he talked to a dinosaur and the monster understood him must obviously be mad. Schiller blinked.

"Do you really mean that?" he said.

Jongor hesitated before he answered. Thoughtfully he looked these two men over. He had never seen either of them before. "Before I answer, would you mind telling me what you are doing in this country?"

"Not at all——" Morton began.

"We were hunting 'roos* in the desert," Schiller interrupted. "We got lost, ran out of water. We were almost dead when we saw mountains in the dis-

* 'Roos. Kangeroos. Hunted for their hides. Also trapped alive, for shipment to zoos in foreign countries.—Ed.

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tance. How we got to the mountains I don't know, but we managed it, somehow. Then the Blackfellows got us." He shrugged. "The rest you know."

"We want to thank you for saving our lives," Morton added hastily.

"No need to thank me," Jongor said. Under the ministrations of her brother, Ann Hunter had come out of her faint. Jongor knelt beside her, satisfied himself that she had not been harmed.

"We were talking about how you controlled that dinosaur," Schiller said, behind him. "You said you talked to it and it understood you. Did you really mean that?"

Jongor hesitated. Somehow he did not trust these two men. He was not very eager to tell them anything.

"Go on and tell them," Alan Hunter urged. "They're probably going nuts wondering how you did it. I know I almost went nuts the first time I saw you riding one of your little friends. Tell them about it."

"All right," Jongor said. He pointed toward a crystal* imbedded in a band of metal which he wore on his left wrist. "This enables me to control the dino."

"That thing!" Schiller gasped.

"Yes," Jongor answered. "When I told you I talked to the dino and it understood me, I did not mean exactly what I said. It does not understand my words. But when I talk—or even if I do not say anything aloud—thought impulses from my mind flow to the mind of the dinosaur. Somehow the crystal brings my mind and the mind of the dino together. That is how I control my little friend, by means of a crystal."

Schiller stared at him in silence. The man's face showed no trace of any emotion. Morton drew still farther away.

"Did you *make* that crystal yourself?" Schiller said quietly.

Jongor laughed. "Oh, no," he said. "I did not make it. I am afraid the secret of its construction has been lost for many thousands of years. I found it."

"You found it!" Schiller whispered.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In Lost Land," Jongor answered. "It was made by some Murto, thousands of years ago, and was lost. I found it, learned to use it; but if you want to know how it was made, or how to make another one, you will have to ask someone else." *

"Lost Land!" Morton gasped. "That must be where——"

Schiller turned and looked quickly at his companion. Morton hastily shut up.

"Ah, yes, Lost Land," Schiller said.

* Like the water writing of Queen Nesca, the crystal was some form of mental radio. By means of it, Jongor could reach the mind of the dino—his name for dinosaur—and force it to obey his commands. Probably the beast did not know the real origin of the impulses coming into its mind, but nonetheless, it obeyed them. In some ways, the device was similar to mental telepathy, on which a great mass of evidence has been accumulated in recent years. The human mind—the suggestion is made that all minds, whether human, animal, or insect—radiates impulses that, under certain not well understood conditions, may be received by other minds. The crystal provided a means of controlling the telepathic powers latent in every mind.—Ed.

* Lost Land is, in reality, an outpost of the vast lost Pacific continent of Mu, which, according to evidence to be found in the area today, was swallowed up by the ocean many thousands of years ago. The statues on Easter Island, the remains of vast cities still visible in certain shallow Pacific waters, all point to the probability that Mu once existed. During the time of Mu's glory, a colony was established in the Australian sub-continent. After Mu was lost the colony remained. The regenerate descendants of these long-lost Murians still survive in Lost Land. The crystal which Jongor had found had been lost by some Murto—his name for the Murians—long ago. With it, they too, could control the dinosaurs. The suggestion has been made that, by means of the crystal, the Murians were able to use dinosaurs much as we use horses, as beasts of burden.—Ed.

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"It sounds like a very interesting place. Perhaps you could tell me more about it?"

"Tomorrow," Jongor answered. "We need to rest now."

"Very well," Schiller said. "Tomorrow."

CHAPTER IV

Return to Lost Land

"I AM sorry," Jongor said reluctantly, "but you will have to go on without me."

It was the hour of dawn. The huge red ball of the sun was just peeping over the edge of the horizon. Its bright rays illumined the little group of humans standing beside the jungle pool.

"Go on without you?" Alan Hunter gasped. "What are you talking about? We would never make it, without you. Remember, we are going to reach the desert before many more miles. You know the water holes; we don't know them. Without you to guide us, we will never make it across the desert."

Jongor shrugged massive shoulders. He fidgeted uncomfortably. It was easier to fight a hundred savages than to say what he had to say. "Sure, you can make it," he said pleadingly. "Schiller and Morton," he gestured toward the two men, who, not understanding what was happening, stood a little apart, "know the desert. Probably they know the water holes even better than I do. They will be able to guide you. You will guide Ann and Alan Hunter, won't you?" He looked hopefully at the two men.

"Sure," Morton said quickly. "Glad to. Anything to get out of this da——"

Schiller slowly shook his head. "Of course, we would do anything we could to help them," he said. "The question is—will we be able to find our way? Remember, we were lost before we got here."

Jongor recognized the truth in what the man had said. Schiller and Morton, having gotten themselves lost, were not exactly trustworthy guides. Jongor knew it was his duty to guide them out of the country. He also knew it was a duty he could not perform. He was aware that Ann Hunter's eyes were fixed on him. There was a strained whiteness on her face.

He had seen her meet danger many times but he had never seen that look on her face. Never, in the time that he had known her, had her courage ever faltered. From the look on her face, it was faltering now.

"You said you would guide us back to civilization," the pale girl said.

"I know," Jongor answered miserably.

"You said you would go with us to America, that—that——"

"I know I did," Jongor answered.

"Have you changed your mind?"

"No! It isn't that."

"Then why——"

"Because I can't," Jongor said.

"Why can't you?"

"Because Queen Nesca needs me," he answered.

"Queen Nesca needs you?" the girl faltered. "That—that message——"

"Yes," Jongor said. "The message was a call for help. Remember, we drove the Murtos from their city. They are attacking the lands of Queen Nesca. She said it was my fault that the city of the Murtos was destroyed, that if it hadn't been destroyed the Murtos would not have attacked her, and that it is my duty to help defend her against the menace I created."

"Do—do you *have* to help her?" Ann Hunter whispered.

"She saved my life," Jongor an-

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swered simply. To him, this statement was sufficient. He knew little of civilization, but the law of the jungle in which he had grown to manhood, said that the call of a friend for help was a sacred thing. Under no circumstances could it be ignored. He hoped that Ann would understand that this was true. Somehow it was desperately important to him for her to understand.

"You—you are going back into that?" She gestured toward Lost Land. To her Lost Land meant mountains and swamps, it meant almost impentrable jungle, heat and rain. It meant a land where death glided on scaled wings from the cliffs, where death lurked behind every tree, where fang and claw and talon were always waiting to pounce on the unwary.

"Yes," Jongor said.

TO HIM, Lost Land was home. The death that lurked there, he could evade, or overcome, or outrun. But he knew what Lost Land meant to the girl and he knew he had no right to ask her to go back into that country with him.

"With Schiller and Morton to guide you, you can find your way across the desert," he said. "Wait for me in the first town. I will come to you as soon as I can."

"No," the girl said.

"But——"

"If you have to go back into Lost Land, I'm going with you."

"Me, too," her brother said.

Jongor looked at the two. They were his friends, the only real friends he had ever had. "You don't have to go," he said.

"The heck we don't!" Alan Hunter burst out. "If you think Ann is going to let you visit one of these dusky queens without her going too, you are badly mistaken. You should know that."

Ann Hunter blushed. "You keep your big mouth shut," she snapped at her brother. Then she turned to Jongor. "When do we start?"

Jongor grinned. "Now," he said. He nodded toward the dinosaur. "We will ride my little friend. We must reach Queen Nesca as soon as possible. Her message indicated she was in great danger."

Schiller and Morton had quietly listened to the conversation. They had made no effort to take part in it. Now Schiller stepped forward.

"With your permission," he said to Jongor," "we would like to go with you."

"Hey! Wait a minute. I don't——" Morton sudden stopped speaking as his comrade glanced at him.

Schiller patted his rifle. He had recovered both gun and cartridge belt when the Blackfellows fled in panic. "We will add two extra rifles," he said. "In this country, a couple of guns are handy things to have."

Jongor hesitated. He had thought that Schiller and Morton would welcome the chance to return to their own world. Now Schiller was volunteering to go into Lost Land. He studied the man. What was back of this offer of assistance?

"Why do you want to go?" he asked.

"I figure we owe you something," Schiller answered. "You saved our lives. The least we can do is try to pay you back."

"Do you think you can help?" Jongor was still studying Schiller. He saw the rugged strength in the man, and back of the pale blue eyes he sensed a hard, driving purpose. Schiller was the type who would stop at nothing to gain his ends, the kind of man who makes a good friend or a dangerous enemy.

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"Of course we can help," Schiller promptly answered.

"It's a bad country," Jongor said.

Schiller shrugged. "I've seen bad country before now."

"Are you sure you wouldn't prefer to return to your own country?" Jongor persisted.

"The question is, could we?" Schiller answered. He smiled persuasively. "We would have to cross the desert. Our best chance of ever getting out of here alive, is, frankly, to go with you. If you leave us here, the odds are we'll never survive. If the Blackfellows don't get us, the desert will. You're almost got to take us with you into Lost Land."

There was a pleading note in his voice. Somehow he sounded like a man too proud to beg reduced to the necessity of pleading for a chance to continue living.

Jongor recognized the truth in what Schiller had said. The Blackfellows were still somewhere near. They were certain to resume the hunt for their escaped victims. Sad would be the fate of any man who fell a second time into their clutches. Leaving the two men here would be almost the equivalent of sentencing them to death.

"You may go with us," Jongor said.

"Thank you," Schiller said. "You will never regret your decision." As he spoke, a wolfish gleam lighted his eyes. He looked like a man who has won a great victory.

Morton was glumly silent.

They mounted the back of the dino.

"Move quickly, little one," Jongor said.

The great beast snorted an answer. It turned up the narrow, winding ravine that led eventually into Lost Land.

THE next day they passed out of the last narrow defile. The great valley of Lost Land lay below them. It stretched away to the mountains on the far horizon, a broad, gently undulating expense of green jungle. Here and there dark cloud banks marked the passage of showers of rain. The valley was plentifully watered. Moisture-laden winds coming in from the far-away sea were forced by the mountains to release the water they carried. Lost Land, like certain sections of New Guinea and Borneo, which it much resembled, had an abundant rainfall. Water and a tropical climate combined to produce jungle.

Seen from the narrow mountain pass high above the valley, the jungle looked like a beautiful landscape painting from the talented brush of one of the old masters. The little group stopped to stare at the scene.

"There is something about this country that gets you," Alan Hunter said. "Imagine the first human being who ever stood here looking down on that scene." He swept his hand in an arc that included the whole immense valley. "It must have looked like the Garden of Eden." He broke off, looked quickly at Jongor. "Maybe it *is* the Garden of Eden. Maybe the Garden of Eden was here, instead of Asia Minor. What do you think, Jongor?"

"I do not know," Jongor said. He saw the scene below them through different eyes than did the others. He did not miss the beauty of it but he was not looking for beauty. Jongor was looking for something else—a protected spot to spend the night, a place to rest for a few hours, and a waterhole where he might wait at dusk for a deer. They had to have food. Ann Hunter and her brother needed to rest. So did Schiller and Morton. So, also, did the dinosaur. The great beast was capable of tremendous efforts, for a short time,

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but long-continued exertion tired it to uselessness. Through the crystal on his wrist Jongor could feel waves of fatigue flowing like gray tides through the mighty beast. Yes, the dino must rest. It must have a night to seek food for itself, a swamp to wallow in.

Stretching away on each side was a high cliff. To the right Jongor saw a protected nook among trees. The glint of water seen through shrubbery revealed a swamp. He slapped the dino on its massive shoulder.

"Go down the slope, little one. Take your time about it. We are in no great hurry now."

The great beast picked its way slowly. It looked clumsy and awkward but it was as sure-footed as a mule. Jongor guided it to the nook he had glimpsed, slid to the ground. The others followed him.

"We rest here," he said. "Yes, little one, you may go soak yourself in the water. And if a crocodile nibbles at your hide, bite him in two."

Snorting its relief, the dinosaur trotted toward the water, launched itself into it with a splash like that of a battleship going down the ways.

Morton looked enviously after it. "I could use a swim myself," he said. "What about it, Mr. Jongor? You got any objections?"

Jongor smiled both at being called "mister" and at the naivé questions. "You can swim if you want to," he said. "But remember what I told the dino about the crocodiles."

"Golly!" Morton gasped. "Are there crocs in that water?"

"There are crocodiles in these swamps thirty feet long," Jongor answered.

Morton hastily drew away from the water.

"I'm going hunting," Jongor told the others. "You stay here and rest."

"Would you like me to go with you?" Schiller questioned. "I have a gun—"

Jongor patted the great bow. "Thanks, no," he said. "I prefer this. Guns make too much noise. If there should be any Murtos in this neighborhood, they would be certain to hear the gun."

Cautioning them to be on guard, he slipped into the jungle.

THE appearance of the little party in Lost Land had created quite a stir among a group hiding on a shelf in the cliffs to the right. The group was located in the one spot from which a watch could be constantly maintained on the narrow slit that was the entrance to the vast hidden valley. From the pieces of gnawed bones and other refuse on the shelf, it was evident that this group had been maintaining a vigil here for several days at least.

The members of this group was fifteen in number. Fourteen of them were human in form. They were shorter than the average man, but much heavier built, with squat muscular bodies covered with thin, soft fur. With the exception of hammered metal ornaments on their arms, they were completely naked. They looked like great, powerful apes, but the size of their heads revealed that they possessed far more intelligence than any ape. They looked like beast-men, creatures that have evolved past the ape but have not yet reached the human level. Their resemblance to animals was increased by the fact that each of them possessed a long, extremely bushy tail.

The fifteenth member of the group was even less human in appearance than the others. He possessed the head, shoulders, arms, and torso of a man. There the resemblance ended. He had the body of a horse.

When Jongor and the others on the

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dino first came into sight, there was great excitement among the ape-like creatures on the cliff.

"Something is coming, Great Orbo!" the sentinel hissed.

The creature called Great Orbo was the leader of the band. He was bigger, more heavily muscled, more powerful, than the others. His tail was longer, bushier. In addition to the arm bands of hammered metal, he wore on a string round his neck a great sparkling gem set in a clasp of yellow metal, an insignia of leadership.

"What is coming?" Orbo called to the sentry.

The sentinel squinted his eyes at the pass that was the entrance to the valley. "I cannot be certain yet. Ah! Now I see! Great Orbo! It is he! It is he! It is the great jungle giant whom we seek"

This information produced a flurry of excitement. The ape-like creatures all stared at the slit in the cliffs. They took great care not to expose themselves. The tired dinosaur and its riders were plainly in sight now.

"It *is* Jongor!" Orbo burst out, shaking his fist at the dinosaur and its riders. "And the girl is with him. And her brother. But who are the other two?"

It was a question no one could answer.

"It does not matter," Orbo decided. "If there are three or five, we shall take them all. Hah, Jongor!" He shook his fist at the beast and his riders. "We have tricked you back into our power. You thought you were gone, you thought you had escaped from us forever, but we tricked you into returning to Lost Land. Now, Jongor, see if you like what will happen to you!"

FOR a few minutes a savage dance of exultation went on in the hidden niche in the cliffs. The creature with the body of a horse took no part in this demonstration. He remained aloof. His manner was somewhat disdainful of the antics of what he quite clearly regarded as a lower order of beings than himself. Orbo turned to him.

"Ha, Mozdoc!" Orbo exulted. "You have carried out your promise. You have brought Jongor back to us."

Mozdoc shrugged. "Naturally, since I planned it that way, it would work," he said. "Jongor would not be able to determine the origin of the water writing. He would think it came from Nesca, and thinking that, he would be certain to return here——"

"And fall into our trap!" Orbo interrupted. "Going to you for help was very wise. I want to thank you, we all want to thank——"

"Never mind thanking me," Mozdoc interrupted. "I have performed my part of the agreement. Just pay me the agreed price."

"Price? Ah, yes, the price," Orbo mumbled, losing much of his enthusiasm. He looked craftily at Mozdoc, as though estimating the strength in that shaggy horse body and the intelligence in that over-size human head.

Mozdoc read the other's thoughts. "If you are thinking of cutting my throat instead of paying me," he suggested, "I would recommend you change your plans. Attempting to cut my throat would be neither easy nor safe—for you."

"No such thought was in my mind!" Orbo said hastily. "Nothing of the kind. You misjudge me——"

"Just pay me," Mozdoc interrupted.

Orbo went reluctantly into a small cave that opened from the shelf. He returned carrying a small deer-skin bag. He poured the contents of this bag into Mozdoc's outstretched hands.

Great glittering diamonds, gems as

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big as the egg of a hen, poured from the bag. The wealth of a maharajah was here, ransom for all the kings of Kush and far Cathay, a fortune, and twice a fortune. As they poured into his outstretched hands, Mozdoc's eyes glittered only slightly less than the gems. One by one he dropped them into a bag carried round his waist.

"You Murtos," he said, when the last jewel was out of sight, "scarcely deserve to possess such stones."

"We have more of them than we can count," Orbo boasted.

"Sometime, possibly, I shall help you count them," Mozdoc said. He turned, and keeping carefully out of sight, picked his way slowly down the rocky ledge that led eventually to the jungle far below.

"I still think I should have cut his throat," Orbo muttered, watching him go. "But there is always danger in that, and after all, what are the bright stones if they got us what we wanted?"

His eyes sought the jungle below them. He saw the dinosaur launch itself into the swamp, saw the five humans in the nook under the trees, saw Jongor take the great bow and slip silently into the jungle.

Jongor was what Orbo wanted, Jongor and revenge. Jongor had wrecked the city of the Murtos. Orbo intended that the jungle giant should pay—for that and for other things.

Orbo studied the humans below them, watched what they were doing, noted how they might be approached unseen. Then he whispered his orders to his band of shaggy followers.

CHAPTER V

The Strategy of the Murtos

DUSK fell over Lost Land. Dark somber shadows reached slowly out from the surrounding mountains, spread long black fingers of shade over the jungle. Gradually, a little by a little, the bird calls began to go into silence. Far off somewhere in the green tangle a coughing grunt sounded as some meat eater roused from the sleep of the day and began to think again about the business of eating.

In the nook of trees, Ann Hunter had pulled off her moccasins. Her rifle lay beside her. She had rested and now she felt refreshed. She watched the men. Morton and her brother had gathered dead branches and now they were digging a hole in the ground. They would build a fire in that hole, a small, shaded blaze that would give off little smoke and would be invisible fifty yards away. When Jongor returned, they would roast succulent steaks over that small fire. The cooking of the steaks would be her job. Preparing food for her men—there was a thrill in the thought. Of course, Morton and Schiller were not her men but her brother and Jongor were. She thought about them.

Schiller sat apart, making no effort to help, brooding in silence over dark thoughts of his own.

Ann Hunter thought of Jongor—and of Queen Nesca.

"Damn her!" she whispered suddenly.

She hated Queen Nesca. It had been Nesca's message that had brought them back to this land. There was little real cause for dislike in that—Jongor would never fail to answer a friend's call for help. But what if Nesca was more than a friend? What if she had been Jongor's sweetheart? What if Jongor had once been in love with Nesca, and seeing her again, should fall in love again?

To a man the problem would not have seemed important. A man would

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have shrugged his shoulders and said, "What the hell——" To a girl, no problem is more important. In Queen Nesca, Ann Hunter suspected she had a dangerous rival.

Suddenly the idea occurred to her to go meet Jongor as he returned from hunting. It seemed to be a very good idea. If he had killed a deer, she could help him carry it. She pulled on her moccasins, picked up her rifle.

"Hey, sis, where do you think you're going?" Alan Hunter called to her.

"To meet Jongor, when he returns."

"To help the big strong man bring home the bacon, eh?" her brother kidded.

She flushed but said nothing.

"Don't you get out of sight," her brother sternly ordered.

"I won't" she promised. She did not intend to go far. Anyhow she had a gun with her and she knew the country. Keeping well away from the edge of the swamp, she walked slowly in the direction Jonger had gone. The farther she walked, the more the idea of going to meet him appealed to her.

She thought it was *her* idea. She did not begin to suspect it might be somebody else's idea until she walked under a clump of big trees and from the heavy foliage overhead a dozen dark furry bodies dropped down on her like plummets hurtling from the sky. They had her before she knew what was happening. The rifle was knocked from her grasp, a heavy hand was clasped over her mouth, other hands grabbed her arms and legs, threw her heavily to the ground. A gag was thrust into her mouth, jerked tight, and her arms were tied behind her back.

ORBO jumped up and down with excitement and pleasure. "Good! Good!" he grunted, as fighters tied up the girl. "Fine. Oh, very fine. I knew I could reach her mind, lure her into the trap. Good."

He was holding aloft a crystal similar to the crystal Jonger had used to control the dinosaur. This one was smaller, more delicately made than the one Jongor used. It had been designed to control humans. Orbo had used it to implant in Ann Hunter's mind the idea that she should go and meet Jonger as he returned from the hunt.* A human who knew that such a device existed could use his will power to overcome its radiations. But its radiations were subtle, the person on whom it was used thought the idea was coming from his own mind. Ann Hunter had not known such a crystal existed. She had thought the idea to go out and meet Jonger had come from her own mind. It hadn't. It had come from Orbo's crystal.

Orbo was very pleased with himself.

Umber, his lieutenant, who was only slightly less strong, slightly less brutal, and whose tail was not quite as bushy, and who resented all three of these facts, was not so pleased.

"Why did we not use the crystal to lure Jonger into a trap?" Umber grumpily demanded. "What good will this skinny female do us? It is Jongor we want. Why did we not use the crystal on him?"

"You are a fool and the son of a fool!" Orbo stated flatly. "Jongor knows us. He knows the crystal. If we tried to use the crystal on him, he would know instantly what was happening, and instead of luring him into a trap, we would find ourselves in one.

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*The Murtos still possessed some of the scientific devices developed by the ancient Murians. However they have lost all understanding of the nature of the instruments, which they regard as magic and use according to formulae handed down for generations, with no conception of the underlying principle. Once the devices are out of order, the Murtos do not know how to repair them.—Ed.

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Anybody but a fool would know that," Orbo ended.

Umber was not pleased to be called a fool. But, looking thoughtfully at his chief's bulk, he decided there was nothing he could do about it. "I still do not see what good the girl will do," he muttered. "She will only get us into trouble. Jongor will go crazy when he learns that we have her. His anger will be terrible. I still remember what he did to our city," Umber said uneasily.

"You have no more sense than a chattering monkey,'" Orbo grunted. "We need the girl. She will be the bait for our trap, the one bait Jongor will not be able to resist. Certainly he will be angry. Certainly he will come seeking her. That is what we want him to do. We will leave a trail for him to follow. When he comes seeking the girl—" Orbo grinned delightedly and drew a hairy thumb across an equally hairy throat, making a snicking noise as he did so.

Not until then did Umber understand his chief's strategy. It was good strategy, Umber reluctantly admitted. But even then he didn't like it, largely because he had not thought of it himself. Umber had the opinion that he, and not Orbo, should be chief of the Murtos.

Under Orbo's direction, the Murto's, forcing the gagged girl to walk with them, slipped furtively into the jungle. They left a clear trail behind them.

JONGOR found hunting anything but easy. It was one of those days when the jungle seems lifeless, when the game animals all seem hidden. Far distant on the cliffs he glimpsed pterodactyls but he knew from experience that their tough, leathery flesh made poor eating. Basking on the mud flats beside the swampy pools he saw alligators but he didn't want them either. He wanted a deer, if he could get one. And deer he could not find.

It was almost night before he found one, feeding in a little glade below the cliffs. The stalk he made to get within shooting range would have won enthusiastic approval from an expert woodsman. He thought nothing of it. It was routine to him, something he had been doing all his life. The startled deer fell to his first arrow.

Slinging it over his shoulder, he started at a dog-trot back to camp. Heavy dusk had fallen before he arrived. He caught the vague reflection of the tiny campfire in the gathering darkness. The sight sent a thrill through him. A fire glistening in the night was home. He caught glimpses of the figures moving around it and called out softly.

"Hello, the camp."

He knew better than to return even to his own camp without giving warning of his coming. If he came blundering out of the dusk without telling them who he was, he might get a bullet as his reception.

The three men looked up as he came into the firelight.

"A deer!" Morton gloated.

Schiller's eyes lit with an appreciative gleam.

Alan Hunter looked behind Jonger. "Where's Ann?" he asked.

Jonger's heart missed a beat. "Ann? Isn't she here with you?"

"No. She went out to meet you as you came back. Didn't you see her?"

For a split second Jongor was a bronze statue in the gathering dusk. "Which way did she go?" he asked.

"That way," Alan Hunter answered, pointing. "You don't think anything has happened to her, do you? She promised not to go far——"

Jonger, dropping the deer on the ground, was already turning. Scarcely noticing that Alan was running beside him, he picked up the trail she had

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left, followed it with the ease of a dog running on a hot scent. An American Indian would have appreciated his ability to follow a trail, but, like stalking the deer, it was something that long training had enabled him to perfect. A broken twig, a turned blade of grass, the scuff of a moccasin in soft soil.

He was barely out of sight of camp when he found a place where the ground had been disturbed as though by a slight struggle. His keen eyes, even in the fast-gathering night, read the sign at a glance. A single word dropped from his lips.

"Murtos!"

Alan Hunter went pale.

"Murtos!"

"A small band of them," Jonger said. "They must have seen her coming and hid themselves in the trees. They took her completely by surprise. See! They went in that direction, taking her with them——"

Leaving the unwilling man behind him, Jongor plunged into the jungle. The trail was clear before him. Even in the semi-dusk, he could follow it.

WITHIN fifteen minutes the gathering dusk had turned into darkness. Even his keen eyes could not discern the trail. He knew the bitter truth. The Murtos had captured Ann, and there wasn't anything he could do about it. He just couldn't see well enough to follow the trail. He had to go back.

"What are we going to do?" the perturbed Alan Hunter demanded.

"There is nothing we can do—until tomorrow," Jongor answered.

"But the Murtos——"

"I know it. I can't help it."

The words were hot with suppressed rage. In that moment, Jongor could cheerfully have broken the neck of every Murto who had ever been born.

"Sorry, Jongor," Alan Hunter said miserably. "I should have watched her better. I shouldn't have let her leave camp. But I didn't think there were any Murtos in the vicinity, and——" He spread his hands in a helpless gesture.

"Neither did I!" Jongor said bitterly. "Tomorrow—as soon as it is light—we will take up the trail. We'll get her back, if——"

He couldn't finish the sentence! He was wondering if Ann Hunter would be alive tomorrow.

The two reluctantly returned to the camp fire.

IN THE distance, Orbo danced with rage. He had not gone far until he stopped and prepared his ambush for the one whom he knew would follow swiftly on the trail.

"Damn him!" he grunted. "Damn him! He has all the luck. If it hadn't gotten too dark, he would have been able to follow the trail, and we would have had him!"

"Too bad!" Umber said unsympathetically. "In the meantime, since we cannot have Jongor, let us kill the girl. It would be easy to fling her dead body into the camp at night. How Jongor would rave when that happened!"

To Umber the idea was very appealing. To kill the girl and fling her body into the camp—what a great joke on Jongor!

"Shall I kill her now?" he asked eagerly.

"No!" Orbo roared.

"But——"

"Fool! Jongor will be certain to take up the trail again tomorrow. We will lay another ambush for him, and this time he will not escape. We must not kill the girl, yet. She is the one bait that will lure Jongor into our

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trap—tomorrow! That is my plan."

Umber was discomfited. He consoled himself with the thought that tomorrow he would get to do what he wished with the girl, and with Jongor too. There was the further consolation that some day, when he felt his luck was good, he would do the same thing to Orbo. In the meantime it was to his interest to help carry out Orbo's plans.

"We will take the female with us," Orbo directed.

The band of hairy man-beasts hastily set about doing his bidding.

CHAPTER VI

The Murto Ambush

ANN HUNTER had met the Murtos before.* She knew enough of their language to know what they were talking about. She shuddered at the callous way in which they discussed killing her. She didn't want to die! She certainly did not want to die! But even worse than the fear of death was the knowledge that they were going to use her as bait to lure Jongor into a trap.

It was a bait he would never he able to resist, she knew. As darkness fell, she saw the Murtos lay their first ambush. Jongor would follow the trail. Desperately she tried to loosen the gag in her mouth, to call out a warning.

When darkness prevented him from following the trail, she was almost hysterical with relief. Jongor had escaped the ambush. He was safe. Her relief vanished when she heard Orbo planning the ambush they would lay tomorrow.

She knew these degenerate descendents of the long-lost Murians well enough to know that they would stop at nothing in their efforts to capture Jongor. The jungle giant had affronted them, more, he had affronted their gods. Such a stain could only be washed out in blood.

Ann Hunter knew what she had to do. She had to escape, to pull Jongor off her trail, to warn him. Otherwise she would certainly lure him to his death.

As the Murtos goaded her through the night, she tried to think of a way to escape. Her arms were tied behind her back, there was a gag in her mouth. In order that she might walk, and thus save them the trouble of carrying her, the Murtos had left her legs free. If she could get loose, she could run. The only problem was to get loose. Where her arms were tied together, a length of rawhide rope had been attached. The Murto following behind her held this rope.

The shaggy beasts were spread out in a line, Orbo in the lead, as they fought their way through the night-darkened jungle. The going was slow. When the moon rose, they made better speed. Ann, waiting her chance, tried to slip suddenly out of line, and by jerking the rope out of the hands of the Murto following her, be free to run.

Her effort got her only grunted curses and blows from the butt end of a spear. The Murto had taken the precaution of tieing the rope around his wrist.

"Keep in line!" he grunted. "The next time I will use the point of the spear, not the butt."

After that, she kept in line.

Orbo, in the lead, spent a great deal of time in picking out the exact spot where he wanted to lay an ambush on

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* Ann Hunter had been held captive by the Murtos. It was then that she had learned their language.—Ed.

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the morrow—an open space with an overwhelming ledge on one side and a heavy growth of trees on the other.

"Three men above, with spears. Three men in the trees, with spears. Three men hidden behind, to cut off his retreat if he escapes the first cast of the spears, three men to wait ahead, if he tries to run forward, one man to guard the girl. I, personally, will give the signal for the first cast of the spears—"

Orbo enthusiastically completed the plan. "If he is wounded at the first cast of the spears, we want to take him alive, if we can."

He didn't say why they wanted to take Jongor alive, if they could, but Ann Hunter knew the reason. These degenerate human beasts would like nothing better than to take their enemy alive, so they could torture him to death.

For once, Umber found he could agree with a suggestion of his chief.

"We catch him alive, we fix him and female at same time, huh? Good!"

ORBO made certain that the trail led directly across the open space and that there was nothing in the vicinity that would make Jongor suspicious. He posted sentries, to make certain that warning would be given if Jongor, by some magical means, should manage to follow the trail in the darkness. Orbo was not missing any bets.

Umber was detailed to guard the girl. Her only hope was that he might go to sleep, relax his grip on the rope, and permit her to escape. Umber did go to sleep. He found a soft spot at the butt of a tree and soon was snoring loudly. But before he went to sleep he took the precaution of tying the end of the rawhide rope to a sapling.

Ann Hunter spent a desperate hour trying to work free. She could feel the knot but no matter how much she tried, she could not pull it loose. Umber snored on. His spear was lying beside him on the ground. Moonlight filtering through the leaves of the trees was dully reflected from the blade.

The girl caught the gleam of the moonlight on the spear blade. Her heart leaped with sudden hope. If she, somehow, could pull that spear to her——

By using the toe of one foot against the heel of the other, she managed to slip off one moccasin. Stretching as far as the rope would let her, she could touch the end of the spear shaft.

For the first time in her life she envied the monkeys. Monkeys could use their feet almost as well as their hands. If she had had similar control of her feet, she could have pulled the spear to her easily.

As it was, her toes would not grasp it. The spear was within her reach, but she could not pull it to her.

Finally she managed to get the end of the shaft between her big and second toes. She pulled gently. Her heart pounded madly. The spear moved.

The next half-hour was pure agony. She had to work with extreme care. The slightest sound might waken Umber. She pulled the spear to her, got the blade behind her, began to saw the thongs that bound her hands across the edges. The ropes were tough. The spear blade was not very sharp. The gag in her mouth was killing her. She couldn't see what she was doing. The position was extremely awkward and to tug the tough thongs across the blade of the spear was very tiring. There was a dozen times when she felt she must give up, when she thought she didn't have the strength to shove the ropes again across the blade.

Umber suddenly stopped snoring, grunted, and sat up.

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Ann Hunter did not move a muscle. Had he heard her? Had he somehow sensed what she was trying to do?

The Murto looked at her, was reassured by the fact that she was still present. Grunting again, he laid back down to sleep. His snores soon sounded as loud as ever.

Somewhere in the night a lion coughed.

She shoved the ropes again across the blade. There was no feeling of pressure.

Her first thought was that she had missed the edge of the spear. Then, as she groped for it, she realized that her arms had fallen down a little.

The tough thongs had been sawed through. Her hands were free!

The muscles in her arms were so cramped she could barely move. She tore at the gag in her mouth, managed to pull it loose. A flood of air poured into her lungs. The gag had almost suffocated her. For an instant she sat without moving, sucking great mouthful's of air into her heaving lungs. Strength came back. She picked up the spear, got to her feet.

For a moment, spear in hand, the sleeping Umber held her eyes. One downward thrust——

Appealing as it was, she gave up the idea. If she didn't kill him instantly, his struggle would alarm the others. No, Umber would have to remain alive.

Armed only with the spear, she slid furtively into the jungle night.

ANN HUNTER had but one purpose—to cut around the camp of the Murtos and pick up the trail they had left behind them. Sometime soon after dawn Jongor would come down that trail. The Murtos, when they discovered she had escaped, might withdraw from their ambush. They might not withdraw either. They might send two or three of the shaggy human beasts after her while the others remained in wait for Jongor.

She had to warn him before he reached the trap.

She cut a big circle around the sleeping Murtos. Even with the help of the moonlight, the going was tough. Suddenly a cough sounded in the tangled underbrush near her.

Her heart almost stopped beating. There was a lion somewhere close. She stood without moving, spear poised.

With that spear, Jongor could have fought a lion. But even he, in preference to fighting a hungry lion in the dark, would have run. The wild animals of this forgotten world, having had little or no contact with human beings, had never learned to fear men. The lions here were great shaggy-maned beasts, larger even than the pampered specimens she had seen in zoos.

Mouth open, not even daring to breathe, she listened. The cough did not come again. Probably the lion had not seen or scented her or it would not have coughed in the first place. But any minute the softly moving jungle wind might take her scent to it. She knew what would happen if it did discover her presence.

A foot at a time, she began to back away. The jungle was silent—too silent. All the little voices of the night had hastily shut up when the cough came. The king of beasts was in the vicinity. It was no time for little animals to be making a noise, attracting attention to themselves.

Ann Hunter slipped farther and farther away. Had the lion scented her? Was it stalking her in the jungle night? For all their size and ungainly appearance, she knew the great beasts could move as silently as a shadow. The fact that she heard no sound did not mean

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she was not being trailed. On the contrary, she knew it probably meant she *was* being stalked.

Moonlight suddenly looked back at her from the tangle of the jungle, twin balls of glowing light. The eyes of the lion, freakishly reflected by the moonlight.

It was looking in her direction.

She did not know whether the beast saw her. It was certainly looking toward her. She did not move.

The eyes winked out.

The thought occurred to her to seek safety in a tree. The idea was dismissed as soon as it came. At daylight the Murtos would find her roosting. She preferred the lion to being caught again by the degenerate human beasts.

As fast as she could, she slipped through the jungle.

Again she saw the eyes.

The lion *was* following her.

She started to run.

It ran after her. Now it made no particular effort to move silently. Nor did it try to catch up with her. It seemed to be content just to follow her.

Intuitively she knew that the beast was full-fed. It was merely playing with her. She had seen house cats indulge in similar play. It wasn't much interested in catching her. It was just having fun.

There was no relief in this discovery. At any minute, the lion might grow tired of its play, and charge in earnest, kill for the fun of killing. If she let it get too close to her, the temptation would be too great for it to resist.

That was the beginning of the most horrible experience she had ever lived through. The lion did not try to catch her. It just followed. When she showed signs of wanting to stop, it coughed. After that, it was certain to have the fun of chasing her. She couldn't stop, she couldn't out-run it. No matter how fast she went, it had no difficulty in keeping close behind her. She dodged into shadows, tore her way through briars, forced herself to cross streams. Always it followed her. The chase went on until she was on the verge of exhaustion. The moon was setting in the west when she found she could go no farther. With the last remnants of her strength, she managed to climb a tree. The lion came up to the butt of the tree, looked up, yawned, turned around two or three times, stretched, and laid down.

The night was almost over. The time had come for it to rest. It went to sleep under the tree.

The tired girl watched the sun rise. Somewhere in Lost Land the same golden shafts of light from the rising sun were leading Jongor into the Murto ambuscade.

WHEN Orbo, preparing before dawn to lay his ambush, discovered Umber asleep and the girl gone, he almost had a fit.

Umber was grumpy but not discomfited. "Some night devil must have released her," he suggested. "See, I tied her to a tree. She couldn't have gotten loose herself. A devil must have helped her." He shrugged. The doings of a night devil could not be stopped by a mere Murto. Orbo, if he had any intelligence at all, should understand such things. The escape of the female was clearly not Umber's fault. A devil had done it.

Orbo, in the depths of his black, superstitious mind, was a little shaken at the thought that maybe a devil had released the girl. But he was not to be deterred from his purpose, even by the doings of a devil. As soon as there was enough light, he sent three of his

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band to follow the trail of the girl.

"You hear me!" he said to the three. "You catch this female, or something bad will certainly happen to you. You hear me?"

They heard him. Expert jungle trailers, they hastily set out on the spoor of the girl.

Orbo placed his remaining men in positions for the ambush.

"Jongor will still come after her," he said. "He does not know she has escaped. When he comes, we will get him."

CHAPTER VII

Jongor in the Murto Ambush

JONGOR was ready before dawn. To Alan Hunter's frantic pleas that he be permitted to go along, he turned a deaf ear. Schiller rather hesitantly made the same suggestion.

"No," Jongor said. "You will only be in my way. I can go faster alone."

"But there are several of the Murtos——"

"Fourteen," Jongor said. "I counted their tracks."

"Fourteen against one!" Alan Hunter protested. "You'll need our help. Schiller and Morton have rifles. You have only your bow and your spear. With their rifles, we can mow the Murtos down."

"Four of us will never be able to come close to the Murtos," Jongor said. "They will hear us coming and they will vanish. At the first hint that they are being followed, Ann—if she is still alive—" his voice broke— "will be killed."

"But they won't hear us coming."

"Sorry," Jongor said. "But they *will* hear you. They have keen ears and you are not experienced in the jungle. Some one will be certain to make a noise——"

"I'm afraid he's right," Schiller said to Alan. "With all the good will in the world, we would not be able to help."

"It's a one-man job," Jongor said. "It's my job, if I can do it." And—now is the time to start."

Bird-calls in the jungle were already heralding the coming of day. Somewhere off in the swamp a dinosaur grunted and Jongor, for an instant, thought of calling the beast to him using the great monster to follow the Murtos. He discarded the idea as soon as it occurred to him. The dino would make far more noise than the three men. The great beast had its uses but under the present circumstances it would be no help to him.

Leaving the three men in camp, he turned to the jungle, picked up the trail where darkness had forced him to leave it the night before.

Immediately he discovered the spot where Orbo had laid his first ambush. The trail was clear and the places where the great beasts had lain in wait for him were also clear.

"If I had gone another hundred yards last night——" He gasped. What would have happened was obvious.

They were laying for me, he thought.

After that, he went forward very cautiously. If the Murtos had laid one ambush there was an excellent chance they would lay a second one.

Day broke with a riot of sound in the jungle. Birds were whistling everywhere. Monkeys chattered at him from the trees. He went steadily forward. Once the broad pads of a lion joined in the trail he was following. For a distance the tracks of the great beast were superimposed over the tracks of the Murtos. Then it turned aside after easier, more palatable prey.

The trail was very clear. The bare feet of the Murtos seemed to have left

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impressions in every patch of soft earth. Where the ground was hard, broken twigs revealed where they had passed. The trail was so clear that even the most inexpert woodsman could have followed it.

IT WAS so obvious that Jongor was suspicious. The Murtos wanted him to follow them. Even if he had not found the place where they had laid their first ambush, this trail would have made him suspicious that an ambuscade was waiting somewhere up ahead.

He was running head-on into danger and he knew it. It was a danger he had to face. The Murtos held Ann. Fear for her sent him forward faster than he would otherwise have gone, made him take risks that he would not have taken under other circumstances.

He sensed the ambush a split second before he saw it. The over-hanging ledge of rock, the trees on the other side—this place was a natural for a trap. If they were laying an ambush, this was the kind of a place the Murtos would inevitably choose.

They had chosen it for that purpose. Out of the corner of his eyes, Jongor caught a flicker of movement on the ledge above him. A suddenly startled deer could not have jumped farther or faster than he did.

Spears, launched downward from the ledge, hissed through the air where he had stood a split second before, thudded into the ground.

A frustrated yell sounded from the rocky hillside.

The Murtos had hoped to get Jongor with the first cast of the spears. Failing in that, they expected him to run forward or to turn and run back in the direction from which he had come. As he started to run, the Murtos in the trees were to launch their spears. From the Murto viewpoint it was an excellent plan, one that could not fail in the execution. Whichever way Jongor turned he would find spearmen waiting for him. The Murtos hidden in the trees, the ones lurking behind, the ones ready to cut him off if he ran forward, all got ready.

Jongor had not survived in this jungle by being slow-witted. The second he caught the flicker of movement on the ledge and realized he was in ambush, he knew there would be spearmen waiting ahead and behind. The Murtos would not leave unguarded an obvious avenue of escape.

In the split second during which the spears were flashing down at him, he sized up the situation, estimated his chances, and acted. He did none of the things the Murtos had expected him to do. They thought he would try to escape. He didn't. He charged straight up the rocky hillside, straight at the ledge from which the spears had come.

A roar of rage sounded from the trees behind him. The spearmen waiting there, cheated of their prey, rushed out to follow him up the hill.

The Murtos on the ledge above saw him coming at them. This charge was not a part of their plan. They had expected him, if he escaped the spears, to run away, not to run toward them. They did not know what to do.

Spat!

One of them would never learn what to do. An arrow drove itself completely through his body, the wicked-looking, bloody head projecting behind his back. Clawing at the arrow, the Murto fell off the ledge, hit with a thud on the ground below.

"Give 'em hell, Yale!"

Jongor's strange battlecry roared across the jungle. Jongor, holding both the spear and the bow in his left hand, the shaft of the spear parallel to the stave of the bow, was shooting as he

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charged up the hill. The spear was a reserve weapon, to be used in close quarters.

The two Murtos left on the ledge stared in consternation at the giant leaping up the rocky hillside toward them. The sight sent a shudder of fear through their hearts. They knew this jungle giant. For years they had tried to catch him. He had laughed at their efforts. All the magic at their disposal, he had flouted. Now he had evaded their cunningly laid trap.

"Run!" one of them hissed.

The second hesitated. "Orbo tear us to pieces if we run," he faltered.

Spat!

The one who wanted to run had his wish granted. After the arrow struck him, he would have all the chances to run he could ever want—in the Murto equivalent of hell. As he fell, Jongor leaped upon the ledge. He was yelling at the top of his voice. He hoped the third Murto would be frightened into fleeing.

THE Murto was frightened. He had seen their spears miss, he had seen arrows bury themselves in the bodies of his two comrades. In the depths of his superstitious mind was the thought that this giant was a jungle devil. If he had had the opportunity to think, he would certainly have run, and if Orbo hadn't liked it, then Orbo could be damned.

He didn't have time to think. Jongor had come up the hill too fast, had leaped too quickly on the ledge. Instead of running, the Murto, screaming as loud as his lungs would permit, launched himself straight at Jongor. The instant the human reached the ledge he found himself face to face with one hundred and eighty pounds of madly squalling, charging beast-man.

The Murto had gone berserk.

The furry thunderbolt hit Jongor before he had time to loose an arrow. Bow and spear were knocked from his hands. Then the beast, all clawing legs and arms and gaping mouth, was on him. He had no time to brace himself. The Murto knocked him backwards, fell on top of him.

For a mad instant, they threshed at the very edge of the ledge. Jongor was flat on his back. The Murto's hands had closed around his throat. Fingers so strong they seemed to be tipped with steel were digging into his flesh. He tried to get a grip on his antagonist. Fierce yells below told him what would happen if he did not break loose at once. He didn't need to look down to know that other Murtos were bounding up the rocky hill as fast as their bowed legs would carry them.

With a violent convulsive heave, Jongor bent his body like a bow. It was a display of strength and of ability that a professional wrestler would have envied. The Murto was tossed upward. As he fell, Jongor jerked himself from under the furry body. The movement cost him a great patch of hide scraped from his shoulder and his back on the rocky ledge, but it got him out from under the paralyzing weight of the Murto. Before the fur-covered monster knew what was happening, Jongor had hit him a savage belt with the base of his palm against the edge of his chin.

The Murto had not been expecting the blow. Momentarily dazed, he loosed his grip on Jongor's throat.

The Murto probably never knew what happened after that.

Yells sounded from below the ledge.

"Get him!"

"Catch Jongor."

Like the flying wedge of a football team, the Murtos were racing upward, leaping for the ledge.

Jongor lifted the struggling Murto

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over his head, flung him downward—straight into the flying wedge that was leaping up to the ledge.

There was a loud thump and a grunt. Like tenpins struck by a bowling ball, the wedge scattered.

"Give 'em hell, Yale!" Jongor's battlecry roared forth. Then he grabbed his bow and spear and took to his heels. By the time the Murtos had discovered what had happened, he was racing up the hill.

"After him!" Orbo yelled. "Two extra wives for the one who catches him."

"Two extra wives!" Umber shouted enthusiastic agreement. Such a reward for catching Jongor appealed mightily to him. "Me for that." He charged hastily after the fleeing human. He was so anxious to win the promised reward that he outdistanced the other Murtos. His eagerness was increased when he realized he was rapidly overhauling Jongor. He, on his short, bandy legs, was running faster than the long-legged human. Then he saw why he was running faster.

Jongor was limping. Each time he put his right leg to the ground he stumbled and almost fell. Jongor was wounded.

IF UMBER needed anything to make him run faster, this was it. In spite of the promise of two women as a reward, he had not been too eager to catch the human. Jongor, unhurt and full of fight, was not a prize that any Murto was anxious to win alone. But Jongor wounded, crippled so that he could barely run—Umber's heart was filled with joy at the sight. He saw himself pulling Jongor down, then, later, before a group of admiring Murtos, boasting of his exploit. Killing Jongor would make him a mighty man among the Murtos. Even Orbo would have to respect him. He would be the mighty hunter, the great fighter. Umber ran faster still.

Looking back over his shoulder, Jongor saw him coming. The sight of Umber's bulk, of the huge club he was waving—Ann Hunter had taken his spear with her when she escaped—seemed to drive the human to desperation. He managed to put on a burst of speed. He had reached the top of the hill and he was fighting his way down the other side, seeking the protection of a thick grove of trees that lay in the little valley below.

Yelling, Umber charged after him. Going down hill, his short legs seemed to fly. Jongor was limping worse now. He could barely move at all. He just managed to get inside the grove. Umber was hot on his heels.

For a minute, in the shadows of the trees, Umber lost sight of the human. Then the breaking of a twig attracted his attention and he saw Jongor trying to sneak silently away. Roaring and waving his club Umber dashed after him. Jongor was not going to escape now. Jongor was his. Jongor was only a step ahead of him. The human was whimpering as he ran. Umber could hear little animal cries of fright.

Jongor knew the end was near and he was crying out in fear. Umber whirled the club, brought it down with all his strength, straight at Jongor's head. The heavy weapon would crack Jongor's skull like the shell of an egg, would splatter brains in every direction. Umber gloated at the thought. He put an extra ounce of strength into the blow.

It landed. Umber thought his arms had been wrenched from their sockets. The club had not struck Jongor. Somehow he had managed to dodge it. It had hit the ground. Before he could lift it again, it was jerked from his

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grasp and flung far aside.

Umber found himself face to face with Jongor. Impossible as it was, Jongor was no longer wounded. All trace of the limp had vanished. Jongor was no longer uttering the little whimpering cries of fear. He was laughing.

The laugh was the most unpleasant sound Umber had ever heard. It told him he had been tricked, that Jongor had lured him into a chase, that Jongor had only pretended to be wounded so that Umber would be all the more anxious to follow him. It told Umber that instead of overtaking a wounded human, he had found himself face to face with Jongor in all the fury of his strength. It also told Umber that he was in the toughest spot in which any Murto had ever found himself. Wailing his fright and his fear, Umber turned to run

Something struck him as he turned. He found himself flung to the ground. Steel bands seemed to dive under his arms, to wrap themselves around the back of his head. The bands applied agonizing pressure. Umber heard his neck pop.

Umber had never heard of the full Nelson. All he knew was that Jongor was on top of him and that any second now Jongor was going to break his neck.

AMAZINGLY, Jongor did not break his neck. Umber felt the pressure relax a little. The pain was still so agonizing that it paralyzed all movement but it was not quite as great as it had been. Umber thought that Jongor was only playing with him, like a cat with a mouse. It was what Umber would have done if the circumstances had been reversed.

Jongor had no such intentions. If he had planned to kill this Murto, he would have done it as quickly as possible. There was something else he wanted far more than the death of a single Murto.

"Where is the girl?" Jongor hissed in Umber's hairy ear.

"Girl?"

"The female. You know what I'm talking about," Jongor spoke in the harsh gutterals of the Murto tongue. "Where is she?"

"She got away," Umber wailed. He was convinced that the next second would be his last on earth.

"Got away? You mean you killed her——"

"No! No! No!" Umber howled. "We did not kill her. She got away. A devil came last night and cut her loose. She went away with the devil——"

Jongor tightened the pressure on the Murto's neck. "You lie!" he hissed.

"I am telling the truth," Umber wailed. "Do not kill me, great Jongor. I had nothing to do with it at any time. It was Orbo. He planned it. It was he who prevailed upon the Arklans to send the fake message that lured you back to Lost Land. It was Orbo who planned to kidnap the female and use her to bait a trap for you. Orbo did it——"

"What's that?" Jongor had turned cold inside. The message from Queen Nesca had been a fake! It had been a trap, to lure him back to Lost Land! Nesca had betrayed him! Hot rage surged through his mind. "The Arklans sent a lying message to me! Queen Nesca tricked me into coming back here! You Murtos knew I was coming and laid in wait for me!"

Umber howled again that this was the truth and again he insisted that it was Orbo who had planned everything. "Do not kill me, great Jongor," he begged. "I had nothing to do with it——"

"Which way did the girl go when

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A thin lance of light sprang from the weapon, and the lion was dead

she escaped?" Jongor demanded.

"I do not know. Orbo sent three men to follow her. Please, master——"

But Jongor had already released him. Umber got hastily to his feet and ran as fast as his short legs would carry him.

Jongor picked up his spear and his bow and turned in the other direction. He made a great circle around the spot where the Murtos had laid their ambush, looking for the trail left by Ann as she fled.

He found it. The footprints of three Murtos were plainly visible following it. Jongor set out in the same direction.

He soon caught up with the Murtos. They were hurrying as fast as they could but they had only Ann's footprints to guide them whereas Jongor had the marks left by the Murtos as well as the trail left by the girl.

An arrow leaping out of the jungle accounted for one of the Murtos. The two others fled. After that, Jongor went on alone.

It was only a question of time until he caught up with Ann. She would probably be hungry and thirsty but she would be safe enough, now that the Murtos were no longer following her. Jongor trailed her easily, almost at a run.

He found where she had stopped, where she had changed directions. She had been traveling in a wide circle, apparently in an effort to circle the Murtos. Now she was moving erratically. Part of the time she had been running, part of the time she had apparently been trying to hide. Her trail was more difficult to follow. Jongor uneasily wondered what she had been

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doing, acting in so strange a manner.

Then the broad pads of a lion showed over her footprints and Jongor knew what she had been doing. A lion was trailing her.

He found where she had tried to evade the beast, where she had crossed streams, where she had forced her way through the jungle in the hope that the beast would not be able to follow her. It had followed her. By the signs she was growing tired and desperate. Jongor made all possible speed. Surely, he hoped, she would know enough to climb a tree.

Suddenly he came upon the body of a dead lion. It was lying under a tree. If it had been struck by lightning, the body could not have been more completely charred and burned.

Jongor read the signs. Ann had climbed the tree. Her spear was visible in the fork between two limbs. After she had found safety, the lion had come up. Later something else had come along. The lion had been aroused. It had charged the intruder. A bolt of lightning had killed it.

Although she had sought safety in the branches of the tree, Ann was no longer there. Footprints on the ground revealed that she had either come down out of the tree of her own will, or had been forced to come down.

Delicate hoofs marks in the soft earth revealed why Ann had come down the tree. They also revealed who had killed the lion, and how. An Arklan had been here. The Arklan had killed the lion.

The Arklan had also carried Ann away.

CHAPTER VIII

In the Arklan City

"WHAT, precisely, is your plan?" Schiller questioned.

"After dark, I'm going down there," Jongor answered. With a sweep of his hand he indicated the city that lay in the valley below them.

When Jongor discovered what had happened to Ann Hunter, he had gone immediately for his companions. If Ann was to be rescued, he would need their help. He grimly suspected, from his knowledge of the Arklans, that he would need more than the help of the three men. What the Arklans took, they intended to keep.

It was the city of the Arklans that lay below them. The delicate hoofprints of the Arklan that had captured Ann had led here.

The city lay in a small valley. At the rear, it was protected by high cliffs, which, as Jongor knew, had been hollowed out to serve as a last place of refuge in the event the Arklans found themselves hard-pressed by an attacker. The cliffs were in reality an almost impenetrable fortress. Surrounding the city on the other three sides was a high stone wall.

The place was not large. The whole area could have been compressed within a few blocks of an American city. There had never been many of the Arklans. They reproduced slowly and even after a long period of peace, they would not have numbered as many as a thousand. During times of war, their numbers may have shrunk to a few hundreds. Like the dinosaurs, the Arklans were an experiment tried by nature, an experiment that was found wanting and doomed to extinction. Only in Lost Land had the dinosaurs survived, as had the Arklans.

The city of the Arklans was old, old, old. One look at it gave the impression that it had stood here for thousands of years, that it was old when Troy was a new-born town on the Aegean coast, that it had been built be-

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fore Nineveh, before the first brick had been laid in Babylon. It was built of stone, low, sprawling, flat-roofed houses, usually only one story in height, and the stone had weathered a dirty gray. Many of the houses had been allowed to fall away into ruins and the wall around the city was on the verge of collapse in many places. The spark of life was slowly ebbing out of the Arklans. A dying race, they no longer tried to rebuild, they no longer had the spirit to attempt any but the most badly needed repairs. The Arklans had lived too long.

But in spite of the fact that they were a dying race, Jongor knew how dangerous and how deadly they were. As friends, they were powerful. As enemies, they were exceedingly dangerous. Within that fortress in the cliffs were weapons which no other race had ever devised.

A few of the Arklans could be seen moving about the streets of their city.

"Golly!" Morton gasped, for the twentieth time. "I just can't get over it. They're really centaurs, live centaurs, half human and half horse!"

"I told you they were centaurs," Jongor said.

"I know you did. And I saw the tracks of the one we were following, but I just couldn't believe it."

"You can believe it now," Schiller said. He was staring down at the city, his gaze hungrily devouring every building. His eyes were alive with strange, eager lights.

"What I don't see is why this Queen Nesca would trick you?" Alan Hunter said slowly. "Why should she want to harm you? Why should she lure you into an ambush? You said she was your friend, that she had saved your life, that you had visited here in her city."

"I *thought* she was my friend," Jongor answered. "As to why she sent me that fake message, I cannot answer. The Arklans are strange people. They are not human, and many of their reasons for doing things cannot be understood by a human. I do not know why she aided the Murtos in deceiving me. She may have been under obligation to them. They may have made her an offer she could not resist. She may have had any of a dozen different reasons."

HE KNEW the queen of the Arklans well enough to know that there was no accounting for the things she did. Nesca was a centaur, and her mind was stranger than her body.

"Why did the Arklans who found Ann bring her here?" Alan Hunter persisted.

Jongor shrugged. "I don't know," he said. "But if the Murtos were willing to pay a price for me, they would also be willing to pay a price for her. Finding her, any Arklan would know that he had found something valuable, something for which the Murtos would pay a vast sum."

"Pay?" the puzzled youth questioned. "How can there be talk of payment? What do the Murtos have that the Arklans would want? The Murtos are almost beasts. They have nothing to offer the centaurs!"

"If you had ever seen the treasure vaults of the Murtos, you would not ask that question," Jongor answered. "The Murtos are almost beasts, yes, but they are the degenerate descendants of a once-great race. The colony of Murtos was originally established here, I think, to exploit the mines in this region. At any rate, they must have conducted mining operations for centuries, for in the treasure vaults under their city is the greatest hoard of gold and gems that I have ever set eyes

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on." He snapped his fingers. "I'll bet that's the answer. Diamonds! The Arklans love diamonds more than anything else. The stone has some religious significance to them. They will go to any lengths to obtain them. The Murtos have more diamonds than they know what to do with. *That* is what they offered Nesca, to induce her to lure me back into their ambush. And she accepted the offer!"

Anger darkened his face. He was only guessing about the inducement the Murtos had offered the Arklans to send the lying message to him but it was a good guess.

"What is this about diamonds?" Schiller interrupted.

Jongor repeated what he had said about the treasure trove of the Murtos. Schiller's face lit with interest as he listened. "You've been in these vaults?" he questioned.

"Yes," Jongor answered.

"Did you bring any of the diamonds away with you?"

"No."

"No? Man, do you mean to say you had a chance to pick up a fortune and didn't do it?"

Jongor shrugged. "Diamonds are merely pretty stones," he said. "They are good to look at. I understand, from talking to Ann and Alan Hunter, that they are very valuable, but the last time I was in the Murto treasure vaults, I did not know they were valuable. I did not think they were worth carrying away."

Schiller and Morton stared in amazement at him.

DUSK fell over the ancient Arklan city. The gray stone walls merged into the darkness and became invisible. Jongor prepared for his hazardous trip.

No commando, going on a raid, ever exercised greater care in preparing his equipment. Jongor stripped himself to a breech-clout. His moccasins he retained. They had soft, pliable soles, would give forth no sound. The great bow and the quiver of arrows, he left with Alan Hunter. It was too difficult to carry. The spear, a knife at his belt, were his only weapons. The spear blade he carefully rubbed in soft dirt, to destroy its sheen, remove the possibility of a chance beam of light being reflected from it and betraying him. His face and arms he also rubbed with dirt. Then he led his three comrades to a spot where the stone wall surrounding the city showed signs of crumbling away, helped them to the top of the wall.

"Wait here on the wall," he said. "When I return, be ready to help Ann over."

"You seem certain you are going to bring her back with you," Schiller whispered.

"If I do not bring her with me, I am not coming back," Jongor answered.

"Um," Schiller said thoughtfully. "And *if* you don't come back, what are we to do?"

"If I am not back by the time the moon is two hours high, use your own judgment about what to do," the giant answered. He pointed to a gray stone building, one of the few structures that was two stories in height. "That is the palace of Queen Nesca. If you come after me, there is where you will find me. But give me two hours before you come after me."

As silently as a shadow, he dropped from the wall, into the city.

AS SOON as he entered this incredibly ancient town, Jongor sensed the air of excitement about the place. The Arklans, who never liked the night, should have been in their stone homes at this hour. Instead, the

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whole population seemed to be moving around. And they were not using the streets, as they normally would have done. They were sneaking down alleys, moving furtively, quietly, as though they did not wish to be seen. The streets of the city were not paved with stone—pavement would have been hard on the hoofed feet of the Arklans—but were covered with a soft white sand, over which the centaurs could move as quietly as shadows. Three times Jongor had to dodge quickly out of sight to keep from being run over by a hurrying Arklan.

Normally the streets were illumined by torches set in brackets at each corner but tonight the torches had not been lighted. Nor were there any lights burning in the homes. The Arklans used fire, and in addition, they had, for use within the houses, tubes that gave out a kind of cold glow.

Tonight there were no lights burning in the houses. The whole city was dark. In that darkness the Arklans were exceedingly busy about some strange business of their own.

The only lighted structure in the city was the palace of Queen Nesca. And it was guarded!

The palace guards, like the other Arklans, seemed to be restless, inattentive. Jongor, watching from the darkness, saw that other centaurs were constantly slipping up and talking to the guards, then slipping away again. He utilized a moment of inattention to slip past the guards and into the palace.

Furtively, he made his way toward the cell where important prisoners were held. Ann Hunter would certainly be an important prisoner.

Jongor had been in this many-roomed palace as a guest. The Arklans at the time had regarded him as something of a curiosity, a strange two-legged centaur from some far-away world. Now the knowledge he had gained was useful. He knew his way perfectly about the palace.

Strangely, there were no guards inside the palace tonight. He was ready to fight or hide at the slightest whisper of horned hoofs on the sandy floors but he met no one. The most dangerous moment would come when he passed the entrance to the personal quarters of the queen. The door was open, and he paused outside, listening.

From inside the room, a voice spoke. It was the language of the Murtos.

"Enter, Jongor," the voice said.

Queen Nesca's voice! She was speaking the language of the Murto's, which Jongor understood. She was bidding him enter her quarters!

FOR a mad instant, Jongor thought of running. He gave up the idea as soon as it occurred to him. Somehow or other, Nesca had detected his presence. If he ran, she had but to call to the guards. No, he could not run. He was caught. All he could do was enter Nesca's rooms, to do what she asked.

He entered through the door. Nesca smiled gravely at him. There was no animosity, no anger, no hatred on her face. In spite of her smile, she looked sad.

There was a low cry from a couch on one side of the room, a flurry of movement—and Ann Hunter was in his arms. His Ann; alive, unharmed, unhurt. She was crying and laughing at the same time.

Jongor looked over her shoulder at Queen Nesca and his eyes were burning question marks.

"You are surprised?" Nesca said, and her low, sad laughter rippled through the room. "I found her roosting in a tree with a lion patiently waiting for her to fall out——"

"*You!*" Jongor burst out. "You

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were the Arklan who killed that lion, who saved Ann, who brought her here?"

"Yes," this strange queen said. "I do not know who was the most surprised, she or I. I had never thought to see another of you humans; and she, it seemed, had never expected to see an Arklan. My surprise grew when I discovered that she could speak the language of the Murtos. Then, when I learned that she belonged to you, I was really surprised!"

Jongor's hard brown face, dirt-encrusted, showed a flicker of emotion. What kind of a game was Nesca thinking to play with him? What was the meaning of this talk?

"Why did you bring her here? You talked to her. You knew I was seeking her. Why didn't you seek me instead of returning here?"

Nesca smiled at him and there was something of sad, wistful envy in the smile.

"I brought her here——" She shrugged. "The girl was almost exhausted. She was so tired she could barely cling to the tree in which she had taken refuge. I brought her here so she could have food, so she could rest, so she could wait for you."

"Wait for me?" Jongor exploded.

Nesca nodded. "You would be certain to follow her. When you found she was in Arklan, you would come here. You would find us, if I knew you, quicker than we could find you. Now, my friend, do you understand why I brought her with me?"

"Yes," Jongor said slowly. "Is this the truth?" he whispered quickly to Ann.

"Every word of it is the truth," Ann Hunter answered. "Oh, Jongor, how did you get so dirty? And where is Alan?" Questions bubbled on her lips.

"Shh!" Jongor said hastily. "That can wait. Let me do the talking."

He did not want to answer questions just then. His eyes were still on Nesca, watching every move she made. He had found Ann, safe and sound. Queen Nesca had rescued her. All this was to the good. But there were other questions as yet unanswered. The fake message! Was this apparent friendliness of Queen Nesca another fake, another trick?

Jongor waited, watched. Inside, he was as tense as a cat. This situation was too good to be true. There was something wrong somewhere. There had to be something wrong.

"You are wondering how I knew you were in the corridor?" Nesca asked.

"About that, and about other things," Jongor answered.

"I was watching through the window and I saw you slip past the guards and enter the palace."

"Ah," Jongor said. He still did not know what to do. Was he a prisoner here? Was Nesca playing with him? She seemed friendly, but an Arklan might seem to be one thing and be in reality something else.

"Thank you for taking care of Ann for me," Jongor said.

"It was a privilege," Nesca replied. Still she gave no sign of her real feelings. The only sign of emotion was the slow, sad wistful smile that came over her face when she looked at the two.

JONGOR made up his mind. If this was a cat-and-mouse business, the sooner it was stopped, the better.

"Now," he said, "with your permission, we will take our departure." The words were stiff and formal. Nesca was the queen of the Arklans. In her presence it was well to be formal.

Jongor's heart was up in his mouth as he asked permission to leave. Would Nesca refuse his request? As he waited

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for her to answer, he was aware that Ann was tugging at his arm.

Nesca remained silent. There was silence in the palace. The only noise was a low mutter of sound coming from outside. Jonger could hear his own heart beating.

Nesca sighed softly. "Yes," she said. "you may go."

She spoke softly, but the words could not have startled Jongor more if she had screamed them at the top of her voice. She had given them permission to leave!

"Do—do you really mean it?" Jongor asked huskily.

"I certainly do mean it," the Arklan queen replied. The sound outside the palace was growing stronger. She seemed to listen to it. "In fact I order you to go—at once. Go as far as you can and as fast as you can. Travel all night and all day tomorrow, and all the next night. Keep going until you drop."

"What?" Jongor gasped. "Nesca, if this is a game——"

"It is no game!" the Arklan queen replied. "Hurry, Jongor. Take your girl and go, before it is too late."

There was a frantic note of anxiety in her voice as she urged him to hurry.

Jongor refused to budge. "I have always counted you as my friend," he said slowly.

"And I am your friend. I proved it when I protected one who is dear to you. I am proving it now, when I tell you to go."

"You seem to prove it," Jongor said. "There is, however, the matter of a message——"

He still did not know what was going on. And before he would act, he had to know. The Arklans were a strange people and Nesca might be putting on an act. Jongor had no intention of playing into her hands.

Her face went grave. "Never mind the message," she said quickly.

"I can scarcely forget it," Jongor answered. "After all, it was *your* message. By means of it I was led into a trap. You can scarcely ask me to ignore it, Nesca. With that message behind me, you can scarcely expect me to believe you are not leading me into another trap."

"This is no trap," the Arklan queen insisted.

"How do I know that?" Jongor answered.

"Believe me, Jongor." There was a pleading note in her voice.

"I believed you once. The message——"

"Was a fake!"

"A fake?"

"I did not send it. I did not know it had been sent until I talked to Ann Hunter. Please, Jongor," again she was pleading with him, "never mind the message. Go at once."

Jongor lowered the butt of his spear to the floor. He shook his head. "Sorry, Nesca. I blindly answered your call for help, once. It is something I shall not do twice. Before I accept your orders, I must know I am not being trapped."

There was more sadness on Nesca's face than Jongor had ever seen. "If you must know," she said. "The message, as I have discovered only today, was sent by one of my trusted men, without my knowledge. Mozdoc sent that message, for the Murtos. I do not know the price he demanded for sending it, but it was a sack of diamonds. You know that we Arklans love diamonds, that we will do anything for them?"

JONGOR nodded. For the first time he was willing to believe that Nesca had not sent the message. Mozdoc could have done it easily. All that was

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needed was to slip into the temple of the water god, to bribe the priests. But why was the message so important to Nesca? What was back of all this?

"Mozdoc used the diamonds to bribe my people," Nesca said. "He has raised my people against me. They are coming, now, to demand that I abdicate as their queen. That is why I want you to hurry away. You must not be found here, when my people come."

Jongor stared in amazement at this strange Arklan woman. At last he saw the whole picture. The price the Murtos had paid to trap him had been used to stir up revolt against the queen of the Arklans!

"I am sorry, Nesca," Jongor said.

"It was not your fault. Go, now, quickly. My people are coming. The growling sound you hear is the ceremonial chant by which they demand the abdication of their ruler. They will be here, at the palace, any minute."

"What will they do to you?"

"I have told you what they will do to me. They will force me to abdicate, to quit the throne."

In the night outside, the sound of the chant was growing louder. At last Jongor understood the reason for all the furtive activity he had observed upon entering this city. The Arklans had been plotting to overthrow their queen.

"Then we will go," Jongor said decisively. "And you will come with us. When they reach the palace, they will find it empty."

"No," Nesca said.

"Why not?"

"Tradition demands that I stay. And stay I shall."

Jongor saw the sadness on her face. She hated to give up the throne. She had been born to it and she knew no other life. But, after all, she would find other things to do, other interests to occupy her time. It was bad to lose a throne but there were worse things.

Then another thought struck him, a tradition vaguely remembered from the time he had visited here among the Arklans. He stared at Nesca. "The abdication——" he whispered.

Nesca sighed. "I see you have remembered," she said. "I hoped you would not. Yes, the rulers of the Arklans abdicate in only one way—by dying."

No wonder she looked sad! She was losing a throne, and a life!

The chant was very loud in the night. There were hundreds of voices blended in one vast chorus.

"Go quickly!" Nesca urged.

"And leave you here, to fight alone?" Jongor demanded. "What do you think I am, Nesca of the Arklans?"

"But you must go. Oh!" Footsteps sounded on sand in the corridor outside. Through the door there came in single file eight, ten Arklans. They looked curiously at the two humans, then ranged themselves beside their queen.

Jongor's heart leaped at the sight. Here was the loyal palace guard, coming to the defense of their mistress. There were not many of them, but there were enough to put up a fight. With ten Arklans to help, there was a good chance that Nesca might escape. A swift, unexpected charge would take them through the gathering throng outside. Then—into the night. There were many places in Lost Land where Nesca might live in peace and safety.

"We've got a chance, Nesca," Jongor said. "You may lose your throne, but with the help of these loyal subjects, we may be able to fight our way clear."

"No, Jongor," Nesca said. "These men did not come to fight by my side."

"Then why did they come? Are they—are they the executioners?"

"No," Nesca said. "They are my

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loyal subjects. Out of all my people, these are the only ones who have remained loyal. They come to keep the old tradition—not to fight beside me but to die by my side."

CHAPTER IX

The Arklan Tradition

TO JONGOR, the situation was senseless. He had difficulty in understanding it.

Queen Nesca could not fight for her life. It was not the tradition for the ruler to oppose the will of the people.

The ten loyal Arklans would not fight either. They would die beside their ruler—had, in fact, come to the palace for that purpose — but they would not fight for her or for themselves. That, too, was tradition.

Nesca tried to explain it. "It is a wise tradition," she said. "Sometimes the Arklans have had bad rulers. When they have a bad king, they must remove him. If he resists, then there will be fighting, many will be killed, and the race will be weakened. If the ruler does not resist, then he and those who choose to be loyal to him, will be the only ones to die. The whole ruling group will be wiped out, a new group will be formed, and the race will go forward without the loss of many lives and without the bad blood that would come if they had to fight the ruler. You see, it is for the good of all the Arklans that I refuse to resist. It is for the benefit of the whole race."

Explained that way, it made a kind of sense.

"But you have not been a bad ruler," Jongor protested.

"The people are revolting against me," Nesca pointed out. "That proves I have been a bad ruler."

"It proves they have been bought," Jongor exploded with sudden wrath.

His words made an impression on the ten loyal Arklans. He saw them looking at each other as if a new idea had occurred to them. Even Nesca looked thoughtful.

"You think you are helping your people by refusing to resist," Jongor continued. He had to find some way to make them break the tradition that bound them. *Had* to! His life and the life of Ann Hunter were now bound up with the life of Nesca. The palace was surrounded. When they had finished their chant, the executioners would enter. Anyone found in the presence of the queen was automatically presumed loyal to the queen—and would be destroyed with her.

"You are not helping your people by refusing to resist," Jongor insisted. "You are harming them."

"How can you say that?" Nesca questioned.

"You have been a good ruler. But will Mozdoc, who is trying to gain the crown by trickery, by bribery, will Mozdoc be a good ruler?"

The Arklans looked perturbed. Here was something they had not thought of.

"That is right," one of them nodded agreement. "Mozdoc will be a bad ruler. He is treacherous, not loyal, sneaking. He will oppress the people. I had not thought of that."

"Then resist him!" Jongor said fiercely. "Fight him. Destroy him. Do not let him conquer you."

He could see the idea appeal to them. They were a warrior race, these Arklans. But they were also a tradition-bound race. Almost they roused themselves to action. Almost, but not quite.

"It is not the custom to resist," an old Arklan croaked. "We have never resisted. I remember when Nesca's father was old and was no longer fit to

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rule. We went in to him and he received us with courtesy. *He* did not attempt to resist us. He seemed, somehow, glad that we had come. He died willingly."

"He must have been an old man who knew he was not fit to rule," Jongor said hotly. "Nesca is not old. She is not unfit to rule. With her as your queen, you will continue to be a great people. If Mozdoc rules you, you will degenerate. *Fight Mozdoc!*"

He almost had them then. They liked his idea. They wanted to fight. But they could not quite bring themselves to do it.

ABRUPTLY the chant ended. The mournful cadence of voices died into the silence. In that silence there came the sound of feet walking in the sand of the corridor.

Two executioners entered the room. Each was armed with a double-bladed ceremonial axe. The Arklans had other and far more formidable weapons but tradition required that they use the ceremonial axe on the occasion of the disposal of a ruler.

The executioners looked at Nesca.

"You have heard the chant?" one of them said, apparently following a ritual decreed by custom.

Nesca paled but her voice did not falter. "I have heard the chant," she answered.

"Do you accept the voice of the people?" the executioner continued.

"I—I accept the voice of the people," Nesca answered. Jongor was proud of her then. He was irritated beyond measure at the supine way she accepted the situation but he was also proud of her. She faced death without a whimper. Nesca might be superstitious, she might be bound by dark traditions, but there was no questioning her bravery.

"Do you accept the will of the gods?"

"I accept the will of the gods."

"In the darkness that is beyond will you still work for the greater good of your people?"

"In the darkness that is beyond I will still work for the greater good of my people."

The executioner looked at the ten Arklans lined up beside Nesca.

"Do you accept the will of Nesca as your ruler?" he asked.

There was a split second of hesitation then the answer came. Chorus was ragged but it was still a chorus. "Nesca is our ruler. We know no other ruler. Nesca is our queen. Whither she goes, so go we."

Jonger's heart was in his throat. There was something fine about this people. And something monstrous. They faced death like lions. If only they had the courage of cornered rats! If only they would fight as they would die, then something fine might be done with them. If——

The executioner turned again to Nesca.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"I— I——" She wet her lips with the tip of her tongue. "I am ready."

The executioner raised his axe.

"I'm not ready," Jongor said. With a single lunge, he ran his spear completely through the body of the executioner.

With a thud, the axe fell on the floor. The executioner turned startled eyes on Jongor. Since he had found the two humans with his queen, he had assumed they were willing to share her fate. For someone to resist was not in the ritual, it was not traditional, it was not according to custom. The executioner scarcely realized what had happened to him. He had expected to strike down with a single blow his helpless queen. Instead he himself had been struck down.

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Jongor's battle-cry was roaring in the palace.

"Give 'em hell, Yale."

Jerking his spear from the body of the falling executioner, he turned to attack the second one — and saw it was not necessary. The instant his spear struck the first executioner, a loyal Arklan had jerked the axe from the hands of the second killer.

The Arklans had been roused to battle. They were fighting! All of them were fighting. Like a tidal wave, they flowed toward the second executioner. He turned startled eyes on them, then fled out the door.

Where words had failed to rouse them, a single act had brought out all their fighting instincts.

"Nesca, forever!" they were shouting.

"Nesca is our ruler!"

"No one else shall rule us, ever!"

Outside the palace was an ominous silence.

"WEAPONS," Jongor said tersely. "We've got to have weapons. Those blast guns of yours, that thunderbolt weapon that Nesca used on the lion — we've got to have those blast guns if we are to fight our way out of here."

He knew the Arklans possessed weapons, small, strangely shaped hand guns which hurled a blasting bolt of radiation that was like a flash of lightning. The dead lion had been killed by such a weapon. Now that the Arklans were willing to fight for their queen, they needed guns above everything else.

The ten loyal Arklans were unarmed. Tradition decreed that they carry no weapons when they came to share the fate of their ruler. Jongor looked at Nesca. She was already hurrying toward a wall chest in the big room.

"They're in here," she called out. "This is my private armory."

The lock, an ingenious combination affair, was already spinning beneath deft movements of her fingers.

The Arklans quickly gathered around here. Outside the palace the ominous silence had given way to a far more ominous mutter. Somebody out there was making a speech. Jongor caught flashes of it.

"—Nesca — flouting the traditions of our forefathers — must be destroyed at once ——"

A roar of applause greeted the statement.

"Do those outside have the blast-guns?" Jongor asked the Arklan nearest him.

"No," was the answer. "They can return to their homes and get them, of course, but they do not have them now. Tradition requires that, except for the executioners, they come unarmed to this ceremony."

"Then we'll be able to blast a hole right through them!" Jongor exulted.

He knew the power of those little guns. There might be hundreds of the Arklans outside and they might — certainly would — oppose their ruler's effort to escape; but if Nesca and the ten loyal centaurs were armed with the blast guns, they could blast an avenue of escape through the Arklans who stood against them. Later, when those outside had a chance to arm themselves, there might be a hot battle. By that time Jongor intended to be far gone into Lost Land.

The lock opened with a final click, Nesca swung the heavy door open, eagerly reached inside.

The eagerness on her face changed to sudden fear.

Jongor saw the cause of that fear.

The wall chest was empty.

"The blast guns are gone!" Nesca

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whispered. "Somebody — somebody has looted the cabinet. Mozdoc must have anticipated that I might resist and had someone steal the guns so I could not fight back."

The roar outside the palace was a growing murmur.

"The time is now!" a voice was raging out there. "Attack the palace, destroy this queen who has lived too long — *now!*"

A great shout greeted the outburst.

"Is there any other way out of here?" Jongor demanded. "Any secret underground tunnels?"

Nesca shook her head. Her desire to resist seemed to be fading. The loyal Arklans also seemed to be losing their will to fight.

"It is the will of the gods," Jongor heard one of them murmur. "Why try to fight the will of the gods?"

HE LED them toward the back of the palace. Once action was started, they would fight well enough, with their hands, with their hard hoofs, but unless they got started soon, they would decide they were going to die anyhow, and why bother to fight about it? Jongor's hope was that the speaker in front would attract the attention of the guards in the rear and open the way for a quick charge which might enable them to escape from the palace. Once they were outside, once they reached Alan Hunter, Schiller, and Morton, on the wall, two guns would hold up the attacking Arklans long enough for them to get over the wall. If they could reach the jungle of Lost Land, they would have a chance.

There were only four guards at the back of the palace, and they were gathered at one corner, peering around at the crowd in front.

"We'll slip past them, if we can," Jongor said.

With Ann Hunter close beside him, he led the way. Nesca followed. Then came the ten Arklans. They had recovered some of their will to fight, now that fighting was probably imminent, and they truculently followed their queen like old hunting dogs guarding their mistress from danger.

"Into the palace!" the voice from the other side of the building yelled.

A great roar followed. Crashes sounded. The mob was entering the palace.

The excitement was too much for the four guards at the rear. They wanted to get in on the kill too. They wheeled away from the corner of the building, turned toward the rear entrance — and saw Queen Nesca and her party slipping away into the darkness.

One of them yelled a warning.

Feet pounded in the sand as they gave chase.

Fortunately the guards did not have blast guns. They were armed with the traditional weapon — heavy clubs. When they gave chase, they thought the Arklans they were hunting were also unarmed. They met Jongor with his heavy spear and promptly discovered their error. Jongor did not throw the spear. Throwing it would have left him unarmed. He used it as a lance, holding it in front of him. The first Arklan guard spitted himself on the point, and the other three hastily swung aside.

"Call Mozdoc!" one yelled to the other two. "I'll follow the fugitives while you tell Mozdoc what has happened."

Two of the guards raced back toward the palace. The third one remained just out of reach. Apparently it was his intention to follow Queen Nesca and her party.

"As long as he follows us, we'll never escape," one of the loyal Arklans said.

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"I know," Jongor answered grimly. They were a block away from the palace. No lights were burning in the neighborhood and the illumination from the palace did not penetrate this far. The guard was keeping well in the shadows and well out of reach.

"You go ahead," Jongor said to Nesca. "I'll take care of this fellow." He dodged into the shadow of a building.

Nesca and her followers, divining his plan, hastened down the street. A few minutes later Jongor joined them. He was wiping blood from the blade of his spear.

"He came trotting along behind you," he said grimly. "Come on, now. We've got to get over the wall and away."

A shout from the palace told them that their escape had been reported to Mozdoc. Silently they hurried through the dark city. In the east the moon was just rising. Its bright rays illumined the city of the Arklans.

CHAPTER X

In the Temple of the Arklans

THEY wasted precious minutes finding the spot on the wall where Jongor had left his companions and when they did approach it, a shot rang out.

One of the Arklans groaned and sank to the ground.

"Stop shooting!" Jongor hissed.

There was a moment of silence then Schiller called out. "Is that you, Jongor? I saw something coming and I couldn't tell what it was ——"

"So you fired without thinking." Jongor said angrily.

"I'm sorry," Schiller answered apologetically. "I didn't know they were with you. All I could see was centaurs and I thought they had spotted us and were stalking our position ——"

Jongor listened to no more. He was busy with the wounded Arklan. The centaur had been shot through the body. Nesca was bending tenderly over him.

"Is he badly hurt?" Jongor asked.

"He's finished, I'm afraid," Nesca answered. "Listen! He's trying to say something."

The dying Arklan spoke in a whisper and Nesca bent over to hear what he had to say. The other centaurs crowded around. The whisper died in a rattle and the Arklan's head slumped silently to the sandy ground. He had spoken in the old time Arklan language which Jongor did not clearly understand.

"What did he say?" Jonger asked. Queen Nesca was grave. "He said that when he came to the palace and stood by my side, he expected to die, and that, in consequence, he did not mind dying now."

The words ran into silence. Then abruptly Nesca was speaking again. "He said it was the will of the gods that he should die, and that I, and the others who came to stand by me, will also die, that no matter how much we try, we will never escape. He said our time is upon us, that the time of the Arklan race on earth is ending, that soon all Arklans will go to their last home——"

The words sent a touch of chill through Jongor. Had this dying centaur caught a glimpse of the future? Was this prophecy, a vision of the shape of things to come? Was escape impossible?

He shrugged the thought aside. When the time came, he would die. Until that time came, he intended to make every effort to remain alive. He swung to the top of the wall.

"What the devil is going on down there?" Schiller demanded. "What was all the rumpus about? We thought you

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were a goner."

"There was a little trouble in the city," Jongor answered. To Alan Hunter's anxious question, he replied that Ann was safe and was with him.

"You were supposed to sneak in and get the girl," Schiller said, half angrily. "Damn it, you've roused the whole hornet's nest. Now we'll be lucky if any of us manages to escape."

"I wonder if we will be lucky," Jongor answered.

"What do you mean?" Schiller questioned.

Jongor pointed along the wall. A horde of Arklans were pouring through the nearest gate. They were carrying torches. As he watched, they swung in a great circle outside the wall of the city, began to take up positions covering all possible exits.

"We're trapped!" Schiller gasped. "They've got the whole city surrounded."

"It looks like it," Jongor answered. "Mozdoc, I'm afraid, is a capable general. See! Other groups are beginning to search the city for us."

He pointed down. Flaring lights were visible on the streets. Arklans, hunting through the darkness for their victims.

Jongor dropped to the ground, explained the situation to Queen Nesca. "Do you have any suggestions?" he ended.

"The only hope I see for us is to reach the fortress carved in the cliffs," Nesca slowly answered. "If we can reach it, we can hold it against an army. The blast guns are kept there and we can cover all approaches, if we can reach it."

"We've got to reach it," Jongor said grimly. He called to Schiller, Morton, and Alan Hunter, on the wall, explained what must be done. They dropped down beside him. Morton was almost gibbering with fear and Schiller was roughly telling him to be silent.

Like ghosts, they slipped furtively through the moonlit city—toward the dark shadow of the cliffs.

THE Arklans were making a great hullabaloo searching for them. Twice, searching parties almost caught them. Then they reached the fortress, going, with Nesca's guidance, to a little-used entrance.

The door was guarded. Two Arklans armed with blast guns were nervously pacing back and forth in front of it.

"Mozdoc seems to have taken every possible precaution," Nesca sighed. "Don't try that. Before you get close enough to throw your spear, they will see you and burn you to a cinder. Also, if you managed to spear one of them, the other one would certainly kill you. Your spear will not serve here."

"I was not going to use my spear," Jongor said. He motioned again to Alan Hunter, who was carrying his bow. The youth handed it over. Jongor silently fitted an arrow to the string.

"I have a better suggestion than that," said Schiller. Carelessly he threw his rifle to his shoulder, seemed not to bother to take aim. Two shots rang out.

It was marvelous shooting. The two guards never knew what hit them. They fell in huddled heaps in front of the door.

"Good shooting," Jongor said. "But the bow would have been better because it would have been silent. Those shots will certainly attract the Arklans who are hunting us."

They paused long enough in the entrance to scoop up the blast guns of the guards. Then Nesca opened the door. As they stepped in they saw an Arklan patrol put in an appearance in the street behind them. Bolts of blue

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radiance flared against the door as it swung shut.

On either side of the door were slits so arranged that defenders inside the fortress could fire at attackers without. Jongor leaped to one of the slits. It commanded a perfect view of the approaches to the door. He could see the Arklans scurrying around outside. They were not trying to attack as yet but were keeping out of sight as much as possible and seemed to be waiting for reinforcements.

"One man with a blast gun can hold this door against an army," Jongor said.

"Two men with rifles can hold it too," Schiller spoke up. "Morton and I will guard this door and protect your rear while the rest of you clean out any Arkans that may be inside. I would suggest that your first step would be to get as many of those blast guns as possible. From the temper of those fellows on the outside, I think you're going to need them."

Schiller's suggestion was accepted. Leaving him and Morton on guard at the door, the others hurried into the fortress.

"Will there be guards here?" Jongor questioned.

"I think not," Nesca answered. "They were not looking for us here. Mozdoc put guards at the entrances, to keep us out, but he will not have them inside the fortress itself."

HER prophecy was borne out. From a wall bracket, one of the Arklans took a cold-light glow tube, and lighted their way through the place. They did not meet a single one of Mozdoc's men. The fortress was a labyrinth of twisting, turning passages. Centuries of effort had gone into the cutting of these tunnels out of the solid rock, into the making of this last place of refuge for the Arklan race, should disaster come.

Nesca led them first to a room that seemed to be an armory. It was filled with strange-looking weapons. Great metal boxes along the walls were filled with the blast guns. The Arklans quickly gathered up all the hand guns they could carry. Nesca dispatched them to guard the entrances to the fortresses, except two, which she kept with her as a sort of personal guard of honor.

"What about food and water?" Jongor questioned. "If we have to stand a siege."

"There is stored food, enough to last for months," the Arklan queen answered. "As for water, an underground river flows through the fortress. It will supply all the water we will ever need. The fortress was built here because of the river. Now, if you will come with me——"

She led them through a short tunnel and into a vast room. At the touch of her hand on some hidden switch, the cold glow lamps began to shine in the darkness.

They revealed a vast, vaulted room that had been hollowed out of solid rock. Overhead was a great domed roof. It was an impressive place, impressive not only because of its size but because of the labor of generations of Arklans that must have gone into hollowing this chamber out of the cliffs. How long they had worked here, and with what loving care! Jongor could not help wondering, as he saw the size of the place.

Only a race of engineers could have designed this room and only a race of artists could have created the ornamental figures that covered the walls.

"This is our temple." Nesca's voice was hushed in the dimly-lit chamber. "This is the place we built to worship—whatever gods may be. There," she pointed toward the front of the room,

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"is, I think, our most perfect creation."

She was pointing at a pedestal of solid stone. On top of the pedestal was a huge ball. One glimpse of it and Jongor knew what this ball represented the world. It was made of some metal that reflected the dull glow of the cold lights. On its surface were plainly visible the continents and seas of earth.

On top of the ball was a figure cast of the same softly glowing metal—a winged Arklan, rearing high, his head lifted toward the stars.

Pegasus quitting earth forever might have looked like this. Chin high, eyes looking up, wings beating the air, going up, up, somewhere into supernal regions overhead—this was what Nesca had said was the greatest triumph of Arklan artistry.

Jongor heard a soft cry from Ann Hunter. "It—it's beautiful!" the girl whispered.

"Thank you, my dear," the Arklan queen whispered. "Yes, it is beautiful, I think, but there is more than beauty in it. It represents the Arklan dream that long ago we set for ourselves—but somehow failed to reach——"

THERE was sadness in her voice, more sadness than words could ever tell. Standing in front of the Arklan with the sky-reaching wings, she seemed to be sorrowing for something.

Jongor caught the sadness in her voice. It sent a stab of fear through his heart. His cry of protest was harsh in that silent temple.

"Nesca! What is the meaning of this?"

The Arklan queen did not answer. "I wanted you to see this," she said. "I wanted you to remember me—and to remember the Arklans—like this, a winged dream flying skyward." She gestured up, toward the statue.

"Nesca!"

She seemed not to hear him. She seemed to be listening to other voices heard from afar.

"We were on earth before the Murtos," she said. "When they came, we were already on the downward trail, our race dying out, our vigor fading. But we were still tough, battle-hardened, fit to survive. A few of us did survive, here. The Murtos came, and grew to greatness. Then their empire sank below the waters of the Pacific, and the few Murtos who survived took the long trail downward. You have seen Orbo and Umber, you know what they are now—beasts, forest-dwellers."

Jongor was cold, cold, cold. Ann and Alan Hunter had drawn close to him as though for protection. The two Arklans, the honor guard of the queen, stood proudly erect. Somehow they looked as if this was their hour of glory.

"Races come, grow old, and perish," Nesca said. "We came many, many thousands of years ago. Then the Murtos came. I do not doubt that there were others before us. There will be—" her voice caught and she looked at Jongor—"others who will come after us."

"Nesca, what is the meaning of this?" Jongor demanded.

"It means that now is the end of the Arklans," she answered.

"But——"

"Now is the hour of our doom. We have had our days of glory. Now we have to make room for another race—your race, Jongor. When I first saw you, in Lost Land so long ago, I knew that you were of the coming race."

Jongor looked straight at her. "Nesca, this talk of doom is foolishness. We are safe here. We have food, water, the protection of walls of stone. You yourself have said that we are safe."

"I will die here, Jonger," Nesca said.

"Die?" Jongor's mind flashed back to the prophecy of the dying Arklan

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whom Schiller had shot. "Have you been influenced by——"

She shook her head. "I cannot explain how I know, but I, and many of the Arklans, have second sight, the ability dimly to perceive the future. Believe me, Jongor, when I say I shall die here, I know what I am talking about. My end is here, and the end of my people."

"But——"

Jongor was abruptly silent. Muffled by the intervening corridors, from somewhere in the vast fortress came the sound of a rifle shot. Schiller or Morton, he thought, shooting at an Arklan skulking outside the entrance. He dismissed the shot from his mind.

"When you came to the palace," Nesca was speaking quicker now, as if she had much to say and little time in which to say it, "I knew that my doom was at hand. And all your efforts to convince me that I should resist did not change my conviction. I knew then, what was to happen."

"Then why did you resist?" Jongor demanded. "Why didn't you yield your neck to the executioner's axe? Why didn't you give up?"

"I fought so you could live, Jongor. You and the girl you love."

"What?"

"I fought for you, Jongor, not for myself. The executioners would have killed you too, if I had yielded. And I did not want you to die. That was why I allowed you to persuade me to resist."

Jongor stared in silence at this strange queen. The whole temple was silent.

IN THAT silence there came the sound of running feet. A man blundered into the room. He blinked at the lights. He saw the little group, made for them. He was holding both hands over his chest. It was Morton.

"What happened?" Jongor said huskily. He sprang forward. You've been shot, man."

"Schiller," Morton said weakly. "He shot me."

"Shot you?"

"I wouldn't let him open the gate," Morton explained.

"Schiller wanted to open the gate?" Jongor exploded.

"Yes," Morton whispered. "He said we were on the wrong side, that the Arklans on the outside were the ones who were going to win this fight, and if we helped them, they would reward us. I guess I ought to have told you this sooner, Mr. Jongor, but Schiller and me, when you first found us, we were really trying to get into Lost Land. Schiller somehow had learned that this country existed. He was trying to get here. That was why he volunteered to come with you—because you were coming here."

Anger grooved Jongor's face. All along he had suspected Schiller was holding back something. This was it. He was trying to reach Lost Land.

"He said there was gold here, and diamonds," Morton continued. "I tried to keep him from doing it, Mr. Jongor. You had been good to us—not to mention saving our lives when the Blackfellows had us—and I didn't want to do anything bad to you, but Schiller——"

Morton coughed a spray of blood. He sagged. Jongor eased him gently to the floor.

"You better look out, Mr. Jongor," he whispered. "Schiller opened the door and the Arklans are coming."

His voice faded into silence. A convulsive shudder passed through him.

"Damn Schiller!" Jongor said. "I'll break his neck."

Already echoing through the tunnels of the vast fortress, he could hear the

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hurrying hoofs of the Arklans. He looked at Nesca. "I apologize for doubting you," he said. "You knew what you were talking about when you said we died here. Well—" the grin of battle was on his face—"they'll know they've been in a fight before they pull us down."

He notched an arrow on the string of the great bow.

Nesca smiled at him. "You are fit to belong to the race of the future, Jongor. Hard in battle, merciful in victory, just and honorable; yes, I see why your race belongs to the future while the Arklans belong to the past. We were hard enough in battle, but we were never merciful in victory. We were honorable enough, but the code that we honored was wrong——" Abruptly she broke off.

When she spoke again new vigor had flowed into her voice. "It will be an honor to die beside you, Jongor. Come. I know a place where we will be protected on three sides. They can only come at us from one direction. We will pile their dead bodies shoulder high before we go down. Come quickly."

The ringing call to battle was in her words. At a trot she led them across the temple, under the winged Arklan that looked skyward, under the great ball that was the earth. She paused at the farther wall, pressed an ornament. A section of the wall rolled aside.

"In quickly!" she said.

JONGOR had to duck to enter the opening. Ann and Alan Hunter were by his side. Boards beneath his feet gave back a hollow echo of his footsteps. Why should there be boards here? The temple was cut out of solid stone. There should be no passage floored with boards. He whirled.

The opening was closing behind him. Nesca, and the two loyal Arklans who formed her guard of honor, were standing beyond the opening. They had never entered this small alcove.

The opening slammed shut.

"Nesca!" Jongor was pounding on the wall. "What trickery is this? Have you, too, betrayed me?"

Her voice came faintly back. "I never said that you would die here, Jongor. I said that I, and the Arklan race, would die here but not you."

Jongor beat frenziedly against the wall. Somewhere in the far distance he could hear the crackling discharge of the blast guns and he knew the Arklans had entered the temple.

Jongor, with Ann and Alan Hunter, were enclosed in total darkness.

"I hear water running," Ann Hunter whispered.

The soft rustle of water against stones was barely audible. Jongor was too busy feeling of the walls and trying to find a way to escape to pay any attention.

"Hey! We're moving!" Alan Hunter gasped.

Not until then did Jongor realize that a gentle rocking motion was perceptible on the floor under their feet. He dropped to his knees, began to feel of the floor. He could see nothing. His fingers told him that the floor was of wood. His ears told him that there was water running very close to them.

Suddenly he grasped the meaning. "We're in a boat," he whispered. "Nesca said there was an underground river flowing through the temple. We're on this river, in a boat."

He knew, then, what had happened. Nesca had tricked him into entering a boat, which would, he suspected, carry them safely out of the fortress. It was a method of escape contrived anciently by the Arklans. Meanwhile, Nesca had remained behind, though whether she

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had remained behind to protect his escape or to fulfill her prophecy that she would die in the temple, Jongor did not know.

TWICE, as they floated along, they heard dim roars in the distance, thuds, as of vast explosions. Jongor wondered if Nesca, fighting in the temple, had set off some hidden store of explosive, thus destroying her attackers, and her with them.

It was a question he would never have answered. The boat bumped gently along, its wooden sides scraping now and then against stone walls. Jongor at last discovered the catch that opened the door.

Outside the boat was darkness. Water gurgled near them. The place was as black as midnight. They could see nothing.

"We'll just have to wait and see where the boat takes us," Jongor decided.

Whether they liked it or not, they were passengers in the boat. To attempt to leave it, to plunge into the dark waters which carried it, would be to invite death.

An hour passed.

"There's light ahead of us!" Jongor hissed.

The boat floated toward the light, into it. He saw where they were.

In Lost Land! Behind them loomed the dark cliffs. In the cliffs was a round opening out of which poured the underground river. With the butt of his spear, Jongor poled the boat toward the shore. It grated on the sand. He leaped out.

"Look!" Ann Hunter called.

Jongor was already looking. A great glow was lighting the sky. Tongues of flame could be seen reaching up into the heavens. Off there in the night, possibly a mile away, a great fire was burning. It was in the direction of the Arklan city.

They hurried toward it. Jongor sensed what the fire meant, but he had the vague hope that somehow, someway, he could save Nesca, queen of the Arklans. Nesca had saved the lives of all of them. He would help her if he could.

They topped a little hill. The city of the Arklans lay before them. Jongor took one look.

THE cliff behind the city had been blown to fragments. A great gaping hole loomed in the stone ramparts. Some hidden store of explosive had been ignited there. Possibly the stored weapons of the Arklans had been touched off.

Whatever had been the cause of the explosion, the results were obvious. The whole shattered cliff, the last place of refuge of the Arklans, was aflame. Great rivers of fire, like lava flowing from a volcano, were pouring down over the city. The stone buildings of the Arklans were being engulfed.

"Nesca was a true prophet," Jongor said slowly. "She said the time of the end of the Arklans was at hand."

"Did she set the fortress on fire?" Alan Hunter wondered aloud.

"We will never know," Jongor answered. "Perhaps she did it, to cover our escape. Perhaps it was accidental. There is no way of knowing."

"She was a great woman," Ann Hunter whispered. "Before I knew who she was, I was jealous of her."

"She was the great queen of a people who should have been great themselves," Jongor said. There was a touch of sadness in his voice.

The Arklans should have been a great race. They had keen intelligence and wisdom, and other elements of greatness. If something had not

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been lacking in their makeup, they might have become the dominant race on earth. Certainly they had dreamed of this. Jongor thought of the winged centaur in their temple. Yes, the Arklans had dreamed of greatness, but somehow, in the fight for life, they had been passed by. Other races had gone ahead of them, had forced them to yield ground a little by a little, until, of all the places on earth that had once been home to them, only this tiny corner of a forgotten world remained. Here they had fought to survive. Here they had finally lost the fight.

Looking skyward, Jongor thought he saw for an instant, outlined against the broad face of the moon, a winged centaur flying upward, reaching with beating wings for some world beyond the sky, seeking some final haven in other lands that lie afar. Was the vision fact or fancy? He did not know. He blinked and looked again. The vision was gone.

"Thank you, Nesca," he said to the night wind. "Thank you, Queen of the Arklans, for our lives."

They turned, and made their way down into Lost Land. Behind them, little by little as the night progressed, the glow in the sky died down.

VIGNETTES OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Sir Frederick William Herschel

Much of what we know about the stars and planets came to us through the untiring efforts of this Englishman

WILLIAM HERSCHEL, the noted English astronomer, was born at Hanover, Germany, on November 15, 1738. His father was a musician in the Hanoverian guard. Expecting to follow the profession of his father, he was given a thorough musical training, in addition to the general education of his day.

At the age of nineteen he moved to Leeds in England, and became a teacher of music. After a few years there he secured a position at Halifax as organist, and in 1766 he took a similar position at Bath. Here he became interested in astronomy, and being unable to purchase a telescope, he made one of five foot focal length.

In 1772 he revisited Hanover to bring his sister Caroline back with him. She described her brother's life soon after her arrival with the following statement: "He used to retire to bed with a basin of milk or a glass of water, with Smith's *Harmonics* and Ferguson's *Astronomy*, etc., and so went to sleep buried under his favorite authors; and his first thoughts on waking were how to obtain instruments for viewing those objects himself of which he had been reading." It was in this way that he was introduced to the writings of Ferguson and Keill, and subsequently to those of Lalande, whereby he educated himself to become an astronomer of *undying fame.*

In 1781, with his home-made telescope he discovered the planet Uranus, till then unknown, which brought him so much favorable notoriety, that he received and gladly accepted an offer from King George III to become his personal astronomer. In the same year he communicated to the Royal Society the first of a series of papers on the rotation of the planets and of their several satellites. These enquiries occupy the greater part of seven memoirs extending from 1781 to 1797. While engaged on them he noticed the curious appearance of a white spot near to each of the poles of the planet Mars. On investigating the inclination of its axis to the plane of its orbit, and finding that it differed little from that of the earth, he concluded that its changes of climate also would resemble our own, and that these white patches were probably polar snow. He also discovered that the times of the rotations of the various satellites round their axes conform to the analogy of our moon by equalling the times of their revolution round their primaries.

In 1788 he married the wealthy widow of a London merchant who was as interested as his sister and himself in the study of the heavens. He then began the construction of what was for

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its time, the largest and most powerful telescope in the world. Its mirror was 48 inches in diameter, and its focal length 40 feet. With this tremendous engine of discovery, and aided by his highly gifted sister, the two made a marvelous record in observational work, including the discovery of six satellites of Uranus, two of Saturn, the establishment of the rotational periods of Saturn and Venus, the first of binary stars, the location of over 2300 new nebulae, many remarkable studies of the Milky Way, and a voluminous catalogue of double stars.

It is not too much to say that the work of this notable pair of observers—devoted to each other, as well as whole-heartedly to their vocation—led to a comprehension of the immensity and wonders of the Universe, which had not been previously attained even by the greatest of their predecessors.

A material part of the task that Herschel had set himself embraced the determination of the relative distances of the stars from our sun and from each other. This resulted in a most important series of observations. He had observed many stars in apparently very close contiguity, but often differing greatly in relative brightness. He concluded that, on the average, the brighter star would be the nearer to us, the fainter more distant.

In the hope, therefore, of detecting an annual parallactic displacement of one star with respect to another, he mapped down the places and aspects of all the double stars that he met with, and communicated in 1782 and 1785 very extensive catalogues of the results. His last scientific memoir, sent to the Royal Astronomical Society in 1822, when he was its first president and already in his 84th year, related to these investigations. In the memoir of 1782 he threw out the hint that these apparently contiguous stars might be genuine pairs in mutual revolution. Eleven years afterward, 1793, he remeasured the relative positions of many such couples and his prediction was verified, for he ascertained that some of these stars circulated round each other, after the manner required by the laws of gravitation. This discovery, announced in 1802, would of itself suffice to immortalize his memory.

Herschel received the honor of knighthood from the King, and the degree of D.C.L. from the University of Oxford. He contributed 69 original papers to the Transactions of the Philosophical Society, and to the first volume of the Memoirs of the Astronomical Society a paper entitled "On the Places of 145 New Double Stars." His sister Caroline, on her completion of the catalogue of nebulae and star clusters detected by herself and her brother, was elected an honorary member of the Royal Society, and was presented with its gold medal. On the death of her brother she returned to her native land.

Herschel died at Slough on August 25, 1822. A few years before Campbell described him as—"A great, simple, good old man. His simplicity, his kindness, his anecdotes, his readiness to explain his own sublime conceptions of the universe, are indescribably charming."

★ TO DRINK OR TO DRIVE ★

WE IN America are very fortunate for the bountifulness of nature in giving us great natural resources. One in particular is our great oil pools which seem to yield unending quantities of oil from which we produce countless by-products as well as gasoline.

But the people of Europe are not so fortunate. Some countries like Russia and Rumania have great deposits of oil, but threats of war and jealousies have prevented a wide distribution from the haves to the have-not nations. The outbreak of war itself has further accentuated this problem. But transportation is a vital necessity to all nations and so the scientists of each country have busied themselves in the search for substitutes to drive the trucks, autos, and engines of war.

One of the first fuels to be utilized has been alcohol. The Australians have found that the headaches of a surplus sugar and wheat crop can become a blessing when turned into fuel alcohol. Canada, also a large producer of wheat, is following in her footstep. Brazil has long been troubled with a sugar surplus and so kills two birds with one stone by using her sugar surplus to alleviate the fuel shortage.

France and Spain have both been using alcohol made from grapes as a gasoline substitute. The grapes were first pressed to produce wine and then the pulp was used to distill the alcohol. Even the seeds were put to use to produce oil.

Sweden has been successful in using turpentine and wood alcohols as motor fuels.

In Germany, France, and Sweden autos have been developed that are propelled by burning wood, charcoal, and coal. At first only well-dried, hard wood could be used, but scientists have now made the engines so that they can use wet and soft woods. All over Germany there are stations which sell wood chips just as we have gas stations.

Germany has excelled all others in the perfection of compressed gases, while Sweden has found a method to use the sludge gas of sewage disposal plants.

The war has probably produced many other substitutes that we know nothing about, but even the progress we are aware of is amazing. Necessity is truly the mother of invention.

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HOMER and the HERRING

By Berkeley Livingston

THE waiter placed the bowl of soup in front of the truck driver, removed his thumb from the bowl and sucked at it reflectively.

"Soup good tonight, Pete?" the trucker asked, smiling.

"It'sa hokay," Pete said, and walked over to Homer Pott.

"What'sa matta, Mist' Pott?"

"What — is — this — you — have served — me?" Homer asked, pausing deliberately between words.

"Hot roast bif sahnwich," the waiter said.

"This is a roast beef sandwich?"

Pete didn't answer for a few seconds. First he scratched his nose. Then he wiped the counter all around the sandwich under question. Then he lifted the bread from off the meat and looked at it. Then he shrugged his shoulders and said:

"Mist' Pott. It'sa roast bif."

"And last night?" Homer asked sternly.

The waiter closed his eyes in an effort to remember. He opened them, pointed a greasy finger at the sandwich and said:

"Last night was roast pork."

"So," said Homer. "And the night before?"

"Look Mist' Pott, I gotta lotsa customers. I don't remem——"

"But I do," Homer broke in. "The night before it was roast lamb. And the previous night, roast veal."

There was a baleful gleam in the usually mild eyes of the little man seated at the counter. Homer Pott was completely fed up with this 'meat' situation. And he was going to tell the waiter about it.

"Shall I tell you what I have had these four nights?" Homer blazed. "Roast horse! That's what I've had! Roast horse! To think that *you*—who have sprung from such as Hercules—Pah!"

A pained expression came to life on Pete's face. In a voice full of grievance, he said:

IT was food rationing that brought herring into Homer's life. And in that way a great and unselfish love was born.

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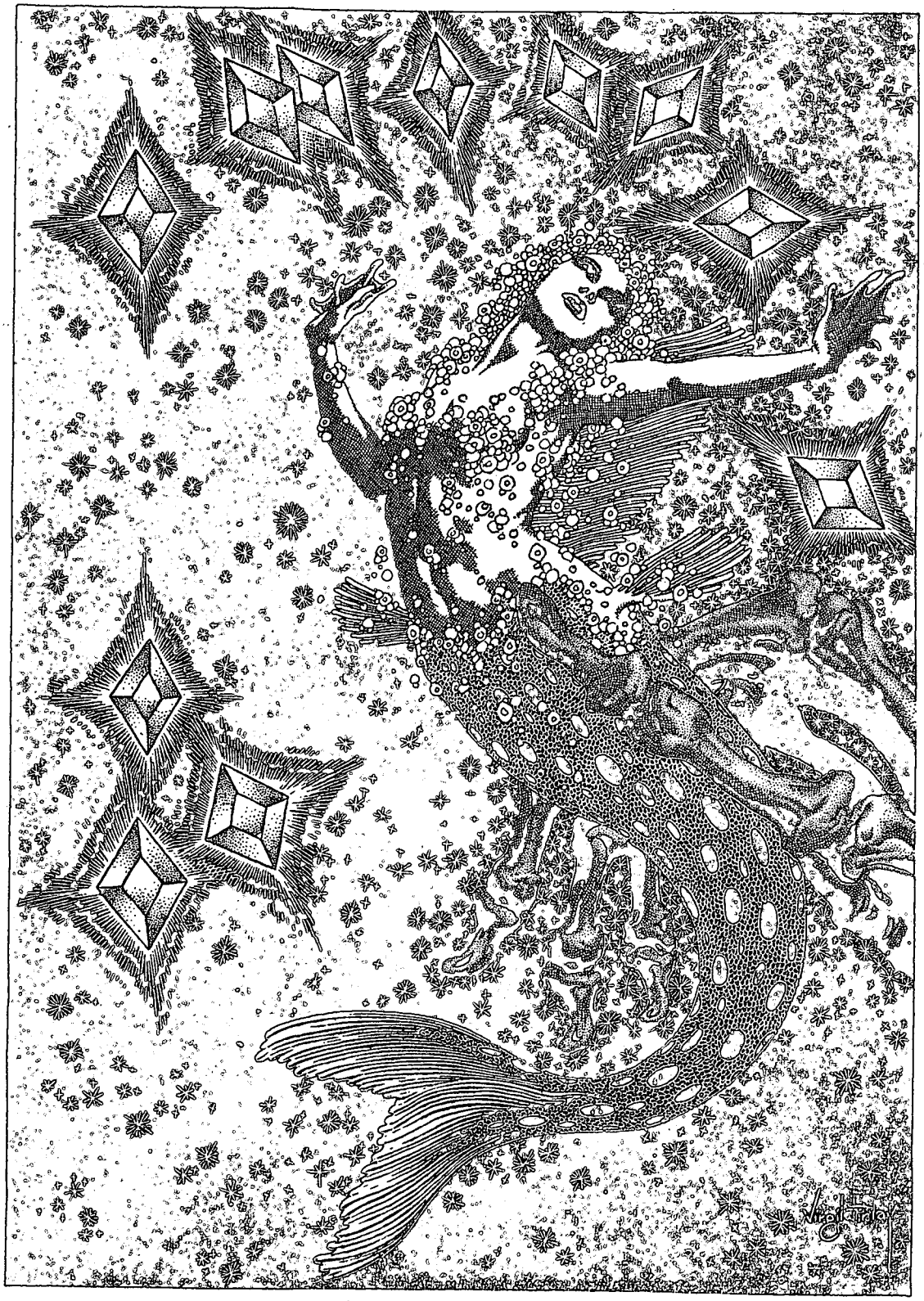

Like the hand of death, swirling waters sought to drag her down

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"Now Mist' Pott, why you say such a t'ing? Last night you say Minerva, she my Pa. Night before, Apollo, he my Pa. Now tonight, Hercules, he my Pa. Now Mist' Pott you know dat Andrapoulis, the coffee man, *he* is my Pa. So plis——"

The gleam died in Homer's eyes. What could he say? So he said it.

"All right, Pete, let's forget it. Here's your thirty-five cents and I'm going out and get some—some—" he hesitated in indecision for a second, then continued— "some *fish* for my dinner."

He didn't have far to go. Gordon's Fish House was next door to Pete's restaurant. The trouble was, Homer wasn't fond of fish. Meat was his dish.

The clerk appeared and asked:

"What'll it be, sir?"

HOMER was stuck for an answer. To cover his confusion and ignorance, he paraded the length of the gleaming white refrigerator counter. Haphazardly selecting some fish which caught his eye, he asked:

"What are those and how much are they?"

The answer almost took his breath away.

"Pompano, sir. Sixty-five cents a pound."

"Sixty-five cents!" Homer's voice rose in a shocked squeak. "By Neptune's trident, I didn't know they were that expensive."

The clerk's face took on a sour look. As another clerk passed him, he whispered:

"Watch me fix this smart aleck!" To Homer he said:

"Well sir, we have some aging herring. Only thirty cents, sir. Very good."

"Hmm," Homer said to himself. "Aegean herring. Must be good."

"Yes," he said aloud, "sound good. I think I'll try—uh—two pounds."

But Homer didn't hear the clerk say to the other:

"I'll say they're aging. They've been aging in cold storage for two weeks now."

"If only Mrs. Leary doesn't smell these fish cooking," Homer whispered to himself as he trotted down Washington Boulevard to his rooming house, "then I will have a fine dinner tonight."

As soon as he got into his room, he closed the transom, slammed shut the single window and got out the largest pot he could find. Setting the pot on the single burner of the small range, he emptied the package of fish into the pot, lit the gas and made himself comfortable on the bed. And promptly forgot about the fish, the pot and everything else.

He became lost in the pages of his favorite book: *Mythology of the Gods*, by Professor Schneidemann Von Rip Schnortt. A curious sound brought him back to the world of fish, pots and cooking. It was a splashing sound.

He turned an idle, incurious glance to the pot on the range. The splashing sound came from the pot. He was about to return to the adventures of Hercules, when he realized the seeming impossibility of what he had heard. Dead fish don't splash!

Leaping out of bed, he ran over to the pot and took off the cover. It dropped from his nerveless fingers and fell with a tinny clatter to the floor.

Something was swimming around in the pot! Something which looked like fish. That is, it had a tail. But no fish Homer had ever seen, had breasts and long golden hair and sea-green eyes. Homer recognized her immediately. It was a mermaid! But a mermaid eight inches long!

Homer closed his eyes and shook his head violently from side to side. That

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should do it. He opened his eyes again, but did not look into the pot.

"Take it easy now," he cautioned himself. "It's all in your imagination. You've been reading too much. There are no such things. And if there are, they wouldn't be found in a Randolph Street fish house."

He laughed at the trick his imagination had played on him. But the laugh turned into a moan of terror, when he looked into the pot again. It *was* real! There was nothing imaginery about the little figure whose hands were clinging to the side of the pot. The tiny, beautiful face was turned up to his. He could hear, but faintly, tiny sounds coming from her lips. That was too much!

With a yowl of terror he turned and ran from the room. Yet, even as he turned, something made him close the fire under the pot. But that was all he stopped for.

MAXMILLIAN MacGRUDER regarded the bottle of bonded Yocky on the table before him with the affection one has for old friends and good whiskey. The bottle was half full. The empty part was in Macgruder. The door to his room closed with a crash.

"Come in, come in," Magruder called without looking up. Then, as he looked up and saw the frightened face of Homer across the table from him, he said:

"Well, well. If it isn't my friend Homer, the little flower of the Pott family. Have a drink?"

Homer gulped several times; then, regaining his voice, he quavered:

"Mister Macgruder, there's a mermaid in my room!"

Macgruder's bloodshot eyes peered unblinkingly into the frightened ones of the little man across the table. He stood up, put his hands, palms down, on the table and said in that condescending tone which the drunk uses on the sober:

"Homer! You're drunk!"

"No, I'm not, Macgruder. Really; there's a mermaid in my room!"

At any other time, Homer would have been insulted at Macgruder's accusation. But not tonight. In fact, he looked almost longingly at the bottle on the table.

Macgruder misinterpreted the look.

"No!" he thundered, "Not another drop, do you hear? Not another drop!"

Then a new thought occurred to him.

"So you've got a mermaid in your room, huh? Well, Homer old boy, there's been a pink elephant running around my room, tonight. Why'ncha bring the mermaid in and we'll give her a ride on the elephant?"

"Don't be silly, Macgruder," Homer said, "she's only—uh—about——" he spread his hands about ten inches apart—"about so big."

"Hmmm. That's how big she is? Okay Homer, let's go up and take a look. But I'm warning you, even if I see it I won't belive it."

Homer opened the door to his room and tiptoed in. Macgruder was so close behind the little man that he looked as though he were glued to him. Softly, Homer came up to the pot and slowly, carefully, lifted the cover. An odor of bonded Yocky came down to meet the odor of boiling herring. Magruder stood over Homer and looked curiously down into the pot.

"Well, where's the mermaid?" he asked.

"Why, she—she's gone!" Homer exclaimed.

Macgruder turned Homer around so that they were facing each other. His hands rested on Homer's shoulders.

"Now look, my man," he said warn-

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ingly, "you're in bad shape. Better stop doing what you're doing and try something else, see."

"But I tell you," Homer said, his voice breaking as though he were on the verge of tears, "I saw her."

"Yep. Like I see my elephants," Macgruder said, turning and walking to the door. And as he stepped through, "But don't forget. If she comes back, bring her down for that elephant ride."

Homer sat on the bed, after Macgruder left, and buried his face in his hands. So it had come to this! It was what they had all said: That he was too alone.

"But what can I *do?*" he whispered to himself in broken accents. "I can't change a lifetime habit. I don't like people. I'm not even interested in them. All I want to do is write my articles on Greek mythology. And live as I have been. But if I am beginning to suffer from hallucinations from too much reading, then I must change."

A WINDY sigh escaped from his lips, as he started to his feet. But before he reached an erect position, he saw the wet marks. They began at the stove and went up to the door. He walked over for a closer examination. They were splash marks, all right! He opened the door to see if there were any outside the door. There were! He could see the wet trail leading down the stairs. A strange thrill of excitement took hold of him as he began to follow the trail. It led down into the basement of the rooming house.

The door to the basement was open but the interior was dark. Even before he turned the lights on he heard it. A splashing sound! For a few seconds, after the lights went on, he looked about, wondering from where the sounds came. Then he saw the laundry tub and knew, even before he came to it, that it held the solution to the mystery. He was right. The mermaid was in it.

He stood beside the tub, looking down into it. For a second he was at a loss to understand what the mermaid was trying to do. For she was at the very bottom of the tub, near the drain. Then he saw her tiny fingers tugging at the plug there.

"What on earth is she trying to do?" he asked aloud. Now that he knew it wasn't a hallucination, he felt an overpowering curiosity. And something else, too. A desire to see and know more of this little creature. After all, the greater part of his life had been spent in mythological research. Here was living proof that such things existed. He grew dizzy with the thoughts his mind held.

"Why," he continued, aloud, "who knows? If there are still mermaids, then there may be other mythological creatures yet existing. Perhaps even Zeus himself."

A piping sound came from the tub, as though answering his spoken thoughts. At the sound, he looked down and saw the mermaid had left what she was doing and was resting against the pipe leading down to the drain. She was looking up at him. The piping sound was coming from her lips. *She was talking to him.* At the realization, he stopped and put his ear close to the tub's edge.

"Hey! Lemme outa here!"

His eyes went wide at the words which came to his ears. It wasn't just the words themselves, although it was a very strange thing in itself to hear those hoydenish words come from lips so sweet as were the mermaid's. No. That which confused Homer most was that the words were English. And not the erudite and correct English which Homer, translated, used.

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"I—I beg your pardon," he said.

One of the tiny hands slid away from the tub's edge and was held to a tinier ear.

"Say, mister," the piping voice scolded him, "I hear pretty good. You *don't* have to yell!"

"Oh, I'm sorry," Homer whispered apologetically.

"S'all right," she said.

There was a short interval of silence. Then the mermaid said:

"Well, are you going to get me out of here?"

Homer looked around the littered basement first. He sounded uncomfortable, as he said:

"Of course, but where do you want to go?"

"Home, silly."

"Home? Yes, yes. But how? I'm sure you can't walk there."

The mermaid realized then, they were talking about different things.

"Look, my friend," she said, "you don't have to take me anywhere! Just pull the stopper out of this drain. I'll make it from there without your help."

HOMER felt a strange feeling of irritation arise in his breast. His voice held unusual determination as he answered her:

"Now see here, my little pixie! That will be enough from you. Do you realize that by your antics I was led to believe I was losing my mind? That you have given me a great fright? And do you apologize for your actions? No! You give me orders as though I were your slave! Best change your tune, little mermaid, else I shall do nothing for you."

There was a humble tone to her voice when she answered:

"I'm sorry. But you did act kind of dumb. And now, will you *please* let me out?"

Homer plunged his hand into the tub. He was unconscious of the low whisper which came from his lips. But the mermaid heard him. Homer had said in the classic Greek of the Ancients:

"And so the Gods still live. But not as we have believed."

Even as his fingers started to pull the plug loose, the mermaid called to him.

"Wait a minute, mister! What was that you just said?"

"Huh?" Homer gaped.

"Dear father Neptune!" she shrieked up at him, "What a goon! What was it you said just now?"

Homer repeated the words. She switched from English to the language he had used.

"Where did you learn our tongue?"

"Years ago, when I was a student at college," he replied, "I began my study of Greek. Soon I learned to love it. Do you know that I am considered a leading authority on Greek mythology. And that I probably know more about the ancient Greeks than any other man."

Homer was beginning to wax rhapsodic. He always went into his song of love when the subject of mythology was brought up.

"Why I have volumes dealing with those ancient days, which are beyond price. Yes. I can say, without contradiction, that there is very little about those ancient days that I don't know."

The mermaid's face held a mixture of consternation and awe.

"Why, Mister—er——"

"— Pott," Homer said.

"Pott," she continued, "do you mean you know what happened between Venus and ——" She left the rest unsaid. But Homer understood. And felt his face flush in embarrassment.

"Well — uh — yes I do," he confessed.

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The mermaid suddenly looked coy.

Homer changed the subject — but quick.

"Look here, Miss ——"

"Maysie," she said.

"Miss Maysie. This is a most unusual situation. You have a desire to go home, wherever that may be. But here you are, a living, breathing proof of what I have always believed. That the gods still live. Now may I offer a suggestion and a promise."

Homer was amazed at his own courage. He looked down at the lovely face and for a second fear tugged at his heart. The fear that she would refuse what was in his mind. But all she said was:

"All right, so make me an offer."

"Very well, then. It is my suggestion that you be my guest until such a time as you feel it is necessary to leave. And I promise you that I shall start you safely on your way."

Her answer was immediate.

"You've made a deal, mister. But tell me, where do I stay? In this tub, here?"

SHE had posed a problem. Homer looked about him, wondering what he could put to use. He knew the laundry tub was out of the question. Too many of the women roomers used it. Then he saw it. A large pan in a corner of the basement. It proved to be empty, luckily.

Homer brought the pan over to the tub and started to scoop her out.

"No!" she screamed, "Not that way! First fill it with fresh water."

He mumbled an apology as he did her bidding. Then she clambered into it. Carefully, tenderly, he carried the pan to the darkened corner and, pulling a stool over, set the pan with the mermaid in it, onto the stool.

His lips were parted in a smile of delight, as he surveyed his labor. But the smile was erased at her next question.

"Would you mind getting me something to eat?" she asked.

"Something to eat? Hmm. Yes, of course. A steak, perhaps? Or a nice salad?"

"Steak! Salad! What do you think I am — a human?" she scathingly asked. "No. Just get me a half dozen live minnows."

He gulped hard, as he remembered that mermaids' favorite food was seafood.

"Alive! Of course. How else would you eat them?" he said, as though he was being silly to think minnows could be eaten any other way.

He was half-way to the Randolph Market before he realized that even Gordon's wouldn't carry live minnows. And that was all Maysie ate.

"Oh dear," he groaned aloud. "Now what do I do? Where can I get them?"

As though in answer to his question, a man carrying a fishing pole passed him. And Homer remembered that there was a little fish shack near the bridge which crossed the Chicago River. He also remembered that they advertised live minnows for bait.

Maysie's eyes opened wide, when she saw Homer coming toward her with a large pail. Homer had bought the fish shack's entire stock of minnows. There were hundreds of them swimming about in the pail.

She started to laugh and Homer wished she wouldn't stop. He had never heard so delightful a sound before.

"Oh you silly goon," she gasped at last, "just how big an appetite do you think I've got? There are enough fish there to feed me for weeks."

Homer smiled wryly as he realized the truth of what she said.

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"Well, Miss Maysie," he said, "I only hope you stay that long."

"Look, junior," she said, "never mind the 'Miss' business. It's Maysie to you. And is that all there is to your name? Just Pott?"

"Thank you, Maysie." He hesitated shyly over her name, then continued, "No. That is my last name. My given name is Homer."

"They don't care who gives what to whom," Maysie said.

"I beg your pardon?" Homer said.

"Skip it, Homer." She brushed his question aside. "How's about feeding me? Little Maysie's pretty hungry."

Homer discovered that the way to feed her was to pick up one of the minnows by its tail and drop it into her open and waiting mouth. He knew he should have had a feeling of disgust. After all they were alive. And, but for her tail, she was human. It didn't look right for a human to eat live fish. Yet, in her case, he knew it was the proper and only way to eat.

He had hoped to stay awhile with her, after she got through with her dinner. But she cut his visit short.

"Sorry Homer," she said, when he suggested they talk again, "but this little gal's going to sleep. Right now. It's a habit we mermaids have: sleeping. So save your questions until tomorrow, big boy. G'nite."

AND so, without another word, she slid to the bottom of the pan and stretched out full length on the enamel surface. Homer lingered for a few moments, drinking in the loveliness of the perfect little figure. At last he turned, snapped the light switch off and made his way upstairs to his room.

Usually his room seemed cold and barren. And sleep was a natural function that came either easily or hard. But tonight the darkness seemed warm and friendly to Homer. As though in the blackness he found a spiritual relief. Tonight, too, the room seemed alive with voices. The voices of the mystic and mythical figures which he knew so well seemed to fill the room with their talk. And most easily heard among all those voices, was the piping sound of Maysie the Mermaid. He began to go over in his mind what had happened to him that night. The incongruity of the situation made itself felt to him. He chuckled softly to himself as he thought:

"The wonder of it all! A mermaid named Maysie and a human named Homer. It is almost unbelieveable and I am sure that were I to tell someone that I am entertaining a mermaid, he would say I was crazy. That is, all but old Doctor Pithybottom."

At the thought of Doctor Pithybottom, Homer felt a twinge of sadness. The old doctor was curator of anthropology at the Field Museum. And the author of several learned books on anthropology. But what endeared him most to Homer was that old Pithybottom was the only other man besides Homer who believed the ancient Greek gods existed. No, that wasn't quite so. The old man's son was another who believed. But two years before, young Pithybottom had gone off to the Aegean Sea on an expedition, the purpose of which was the collection of certain fossil specimens. From the time the Germans occupied Greece, more than a year before, the old man had not heard a single word from or about his son.

"I must call the old man, tomorrow, and tell him the great news," Homer whispered. "How thrilled he will be! Then perhaps those idiots at the museum will stop poking fun at him. I wonder how Maysie will take to him?"

Mention of the mermaid name made

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him think again of the early evening. His last thought before sleep came over him was:

"I must ask her where she learned to speak English. Particularly, where she learned the slang expressions. And if she would mind telling me whether she is personally acquainted with any of the major gods."

"TELL me, Maysie," Homer said, "where and how did you learn to speak English. Especially the slang which you use so readily?"

Homer had made it his business to get up early enough so that he would be the first to get down to the basement. She was already up and splashing gaily about in the large pan. He had given her her breakfast of a half dozen minnows. Then he had brought her upstairs.

He was sitting on the bed. He had placed the pan on the table so that they could converse and see each other more easily.

"Well, cookie," Maysie answered, "ever since I was a little girl I spent most of my summers at Oak Street beach or down by the rocks near the Field Museum. And nobody ever called Maysie a dumb bunny. It wasn't so hard to pick up the jive."

Homer's jaw went slack at her explanation. He had expected almost any answer but that.

"Er— of course. It was easy to pick up the jive," Homer said, half to himself; then, "But where do you spend your winters?"

"Home — in the Aegean Sea. It'd be a nice place too, if it weren't for some of the jerks who come around."

Homer looked pained at her expression.

"Jerks?" he asked.

"Yeah. Like Apollo. He thinks he's quite a guy with the gals. But I could tell you a thing or two about that. And Hermes. What a stupe. You can't be with him for five minutes without him challenging you to a race. About all you could say for that guy is, he sure gets around."

Homer was horror-stricken. His heroes! In the eyes of this little pixie, they were nothing but — jerks. He tried again.

"And Hercules? Surely he is ——"

"Muscles? He's the biggest bore of them all. Reminds me of the time Aphrodite went out with him. They're having a spot of nectar in a shady nook. She's ready for anything. Anything except for what that goon pulls. Do you know what he does?"

Homer shook his head dumbly. But he was ready for anything.

"He takes her in his arms. He says, 'Look at me.' She does. He says, 'Will you — will you tell what I want to hear most from your lips?' She nods her head. Then he says, 'Don't you think I've got bigger muscles than Vulcan?' "

Homer turned his head aside. A low moan came from his lips. Sadly, he whispered:

"No, no! Please, Maysie, stop. It can't be! You make the gods sound like fools!"

Maysie looked at him in surprise. But when she saw the hurt look on his face, she said in a voice suddenly soft and contrite:

"But they're not all like that. Take my daddy—Neptune. He's a great guy. And Papa Zeus. He's wise and kind. And Hera and Minerva and—oh, I can name dozens like them."

Homer, however, was still thinking of what she had said about Hercules. He was one of Homer's favorite gods.

"To think the slayer of tyrants, the man who performed the twelve labors, has descended to such petty doings,"

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Homer said, with open indignation.

"Who's that?" she asked, curious.

"Hercules, of course!"

"You mean those stories he tells are the truth?" Her voice mirrored her disbelief.

"Good heavens, child! Didn't you know!"

"Unh unh."

SO HOMER told her. And in telling, discovered she knew very little of the lives of the gods, as he knew them through the books he had read.

When he finished telling the last of the Herculean labors, he said:

"Perhaps now, you will change your mind about Hercules."

She said:

"Homer Pott, you're wonderful! Simply wonderful!"

Homer's mouth and eyes opened wide.

"*I'm* wonderful? What do you mean?"

She sighed deeply. Then answered:

"The way you look when you tell about Muscles' adventures. Like you were doing those deeds. Really, Homer, I love to hear you talk." She sighed again, and said:

"Now tell me more."

That was all for a while, though. For Homer had seen the clock. It was an hour after noon. He had been talking for more than five hours. But so lost had he been in the exploits of Hercules, and so interested in Maysie, that he had no idea of the passing of time.

"That's enough for now," he said firmly, "time to eat."

He fed her first, then prepared something for himself. She watched him intently ás he ate the simple meal.

"Is that all you're going to eat?" she asked.

He nodded his head.

"No wonder you're so thin," she said. "Well, from now on you're going to eat more. The very idea! A full grown man like you eating a half a tomato and some lettuce and calling it a meal."

Homer looked at the tiny creature; certainly she wasn't more than ten inches in length, yet he obeyed her. Meekly he answered:

"Yes, Maysie."

Then he discovered something else about her. She had to sleep after her meal. She slept three times during a twenty-four hour period, for just a few hours each time. She had missed her after-breakfast sleep because of their talk.

The first thing she asked for, after her nap, was another story about the gods. He was in the midst of a tale of Apollo when there was a knock at the door. Hastily he took the pan into his clothes closet and deposited it carefully on a top shelf. Then he went and opened the door. Maxmillan Macgruder was standing on the threshold.

"Well, little flower, how's the little mermaid?" Macgruder boomed out at him. He was sober for a change. Homer liked him better when he was drunk. There was something of the bully in the man. And right now his eyes held a mean look. The result of his night's drinking.

"Wha — what do you mean?" Homer asked. He wondered how Macgruder knew.

"Ho ho! Heard you talking to her as I was passing. Thought I'd stop in and have a gander at her. Well, let's see her."

Homer told a lie then. It was the first time he had ever told one. He was certain of one thing. He didn't want Macgruder to see Maysie.

"I wasn't talking to anyone," he said. "As a matter of fact, I was rehearsing

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a lecture I'm going to give in a few days."

Macgruder's face showed his incredulity.

"In two voices?" he asked.

Homer knew what he meant and had an answer ready.

"Oh that. I have a slight cold and my voice may have become affected by it."

Macgruder seemed satisfied by the answer. But he sent a very searching look through the room before he left.

HOMER knew that something had to be done about a better hiding place for Maysie. He had sat down at the table while talking to Macgruder. His feet had been idly kicking the pail of minnows. He began to think about them.

"Wonder where I can keep them?" he thought. "Have to keep them fresh. If I only had an acquarium. An aquarium! But that's it. If I can get one large enough and one which has one of those little stone castles in it, that will solve both problems."

Maysie was delighted with his idea.

"See, cookie," she crowded, "you are wonderful! And it would be better for me. Besides it'll make me feel more at home."

Homer positively g l o w e d at her praise. He didn't waste any time. It took all of Homer's slender capital to buy the aquarium but he felt it was worth it. He was a very tired person when he finally reached his room. And just as he passed the landlady's room, she walked out. Macgruder was with her. They looked curiously at the bulky package he was carrying.

"Fish," he said, as he started up the stairs, "going to raise 'em. In this aquarium."

A look passed between the two watching him. That look seemed to say, "Well, it looks like old Pott has really gone potty."

When Homer saw how delighted Maysie was with her new home, he knew it was worth whatever he had spent. He sat watching her swim about in the fish tank and found delight in the way she swam in and out of the stone castle. The castle was so large, it hid her body completely.

ONE afternoon, several days after he had bought the aquarium, he was telling her a story about Apollo. He had noticed when he began the story, that there was a preoccupied look on her face.

"What's wrong, Maysie?" he asked.

"Huh?"

Her answer proved she hadn't been listening to him.

"You seem to be worried about something. Perhaps I can help you?"

There was a look of sorrow on her face. Homer suddenly had a feeling of impending doom. Her next words confirmed his feeling.

"Homer," she said, "the time isn't far off, when I must leave you. You see, we are only permitted to go out into the world for just a few months. Like birds, we have the homing instinct and I have had the first feeling; the beginning of the urge."

Homer noticed how serious were her words. And a great feeling of sadness came over him. He was so alone. His only friend was Pithybottom, and the times when the two got together were few and far between. He sighed deeply as he gently said:

"I shall keep my promise to you, Maysie. When the time comes I will do whatever you wish."

"Thanks, Homer. It won't be long now. Perhaps tomorrow or the day after."

The door to his room was suddenly

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flung open and Macgruder walked, or rather, staggered in.

"Hiyah Homer," he shouted. "How's our little friend, the mermaid?"

He came over to the bed and sat down beside Homer. At the blank look in Homer's face, Macgruder guffawed and slapped the little man so hard on his back, he almost was plunged into the tank.

Homer recovered himself and turning to the drunk, said:

"Why can't you understand I have no mermaid here. As you can see, this tank contains nothing but fish."

Macgruder looked blearily into the tank, as Homer had suggested, then, winking slyly at Homer, he said:

"Oh sure. Sure, I'll keep it quiet. Mustn't let Mrs. Leary know. But I'm your pal, ain't I?"

Homer said:

"Well."

"There y'are," Macgruder shouted happily, "I'm y'r pal! So now let's see the mermaid. Y'know Homer, ole pal, I ain't never seen one. So ——"

"Damn it, man!" Homer was suddenly very angry, "I tell you there is nothing in the tank except minnows." He noticed Maysie had taken refuge in the stone castle.

"So she's in the tank, huh. Well I'm goin' to take a peek at her."

With that he staggered past Homer to the tank. Then to Homer's horror, he plunged his hand into the water. Homer knew his intention. To pull out the stone castle. Then Homer, for the first time in his life, resorted to violence. One hand shot up to Macgruder's coat collar, the other went down to the seat of his pants and before the drunk even had time to think, he was on the outside of the room.

HOMER'S heart was pounding furiously as he waited for Macgruder's return. He knew only one thing. That Macgruder would get to see Maysie only over his dead body. But the drunk didn't come back. Homer knew, though, this was the end of Maysie's stay. For even if Macgruder hadn't come back, how long would he stay away? And would he remain silent? Homer couldn't take any chances.

Softly, he called Maysie:

"Everything is all right now."

Her eyes were wide with terror. Macgruder's loud voice had frightened her.

"Has he gone?"

"Yes. But for how long, I don't know. So I am going to take you somewhere. To a place where you will be safe until the time comes for your release."

"What is that?"

"There is a small lagoon," he explained, "in Lincoln Park. I will deposit you there, near the shore. Then I can come in the evening and visit with you. From there it's only a short walk to Lake Michigan. Then when the time comes I will carry you over to the lake."

He didn't waste any more time in further talk. Taking the large pot from the closet, the same pot into which he had placed the herring, he filled it with fresh water. The pot brought to mind a question which he had always meant to ask Maysie.

"I've wondered about this, Maysie. Perhaps you can enlighten me. How did you ever get into that barrel of herring?"

Maysie grinned at the memory.

"I was a little stupe. That's why it happened. I was at the upper end of the lake. The herring run was on. A mermaid friend swam by and called to me that Father Neptune wanted me. I should have known better. Father, knowing where I was, wouldn't have called to me just then. So, I put my-

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self into a Kata state and——"

"And," Homer prompted.

"And," she said, "came out of Kata to find myself a fish dinner for Homer Pott."

"I see," Homer said, "while you were in Kata you became caught in the herring run. No one ever noticed you. And the water beginning to boil brought you to consciousness."

He had been making her comfortable while they were talking. His preparations complete, he took the pot by its handle and started off to Lincoln Park. He was glad to see the stairs and hall were deserted. Maysie, uncomfortable in the narrow pot after becoming used to the spaciousness of her tank, complained bitterly. People would certainly have been curious about the strange sounds coming from the pot. He made the outside door without anyone seeing him.

Not having carfare, he walked to the park. Every now and then people would pass him by, stop, turn and stare. He knew the reason why. It was Maysie. At first it had been:

"Homer, honey, please! You're throwing me around in this pot like I was a ball. Be more careful."

As blocks went by and the pot became heavier, Homer would change it from one hand to another. Then it was she would scream:

"Hey! Take it easy, Stupe! I want to get there all in one piece. The way you're throwing me around, I'll look like anchovy paste when you're through!"

At last he reached the little lagoon. There was a little sheltered spot where there were a number of large gold fish swimming. Not many people knew of this place and Homer felt Maysie would be safe here. Homer watched her disport herself for a while. The only ones who didn't seem to like the idea of Maysie having found a new home, were the gold fish. She found fun in chasing them around the pool.

Then, after he had promised to come back early the next evening, Homer left.

HIS room seemed terribly empty and barren that night. Even Von Schnott's book, which had never failed him before, seemed dull. Homer knew what was wrong. Maysie wasn't there. There wasn't much sleep for Homer that night. And when he did fall asleep, he kept having a recurrent dream. A dream in which a Maysie—but a full grown Maysie—was chasing him through a large cavern. He kept bumping into statues who would lift an arm, point and say:

"That way."

He noticed the statues were figures of all the gods. And when at last he arrived at what seemed to be an opening in the cavern, a large figure, bearded, crowned, half human and half fish appeared. The trident he carried identified him. It was Neptune. The look of fury on Neptune's face boded ill for Homer. Just then Maysie came running around the last curve in the cavern. She was shouting:

"Homer! Homer! Homer!"

And Homer woke up!

Someone was calling him. He could hear the voice beyond his locked door.

"Mr. Pott. It's Mrs. Leary!"

As he quickly got into his clothes, he looked at the clock. It was noon! Shaking his head free from sleep, he opened the door.

Mrs. Leary and Macgruder were outside. Mrs. Leary had her arms folded across her large bosom and from the expression on her face, Homer saw something was up. Then he noticed Macgruder's face. Someone had hung mourning under the drunk's left eye.

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He had no chance to observe more. Mrs. Leary opened up on him.

"Mr. Pott! What are these shenanigans going on here? I'll have you know I run a respectable boarding house! Mermaids! Fights! Look what you've done to poor Mr. Magruder."

Homer drew himself up to the limit of his small height. There was a great dignity to him as he said:

"I am quite sure you—er—run a respectable boarding house. And you have my assurance that I have done nothing to change that reputation. Mr. Macgruder has lied to you if he has said I fought him. And about this mermaid. Hmm. Probably the result of Macgruder's somewhat inflamed imagination."

Macgruder assumed a bellicose air.

"Hey! Who you calling a liar?"

"You."

Macgruder was taken aback by Homer's calm air of certainty. But when he saw Mrs. Leary wavering in indecision, he shouted:

"Why you little—little moron! I'll show you who's a liar!"

He started for Homer. And Homer stuck his hand out to stop him. He didn't realize in hand was closed in a fist. And Macgruder ran right into that fist. His black eye was going to have a little brother.

Before anything else could happen, Mrs. Leary stepped in.

"So! You don't fight? And I suppose what you just did, Mr. Pott, was to show your friendliness. I expect to have your key in the morning."

Homer shrunk a little in size, but his dignity became greater as he said:

"There is no need to wait for morning, Mrs. Leary. You may have the key now."

HE walked back into the room to see if there was anything he wanted to take with him. All he could see was his precious books. It was then he realized that they meant nothing to him any more. Maysie had made them come alive. Now that she was gone, they had become empty; black print on white paper, without life. Sadly, he picked up his key and, walking out, handed it to Mrs. Leary.

Homer wasn't conscious of where he was going. It wasn't till he reached the stone walk which bordered the little lagoon, that he saw where his steps had led. A wonderful smile came to his lips and a load seemed to lift from his heart. He was going to see Maysie again.

Bushes screened the part of the lagoon where Maysie was. As he rounded the curve past the bushes, he came upon a sight which froze him into a moment's immobility. A small donkey engine was on the grass beyond the walk. Two thick lengths of hose ran from it, into the lagoon. A great clatter was coming from the engine and Homer could see the two arms of a pump moving up and down. Homer knew what was going on. The lagoon was being drained!

He leaped over the hose and ran to the little pool where he had put Maysie. Frantically his eyes searched the water for her. At last he saw her at the bottom of the pool—asleep. He couldn't tell but he thought the water level was lower than it had been the day before. He yelled as loudly as he dared. But he knew it was useless. She must have just finished eating. And he knew from past experience that nothing could wake her until she had finished her sleep.

He was almost frantic with despair. He ran back to the operator of the engine.

"What are you doing?" he demanded.

The swarthy-faced engineer took the pipe from his lips and said:

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"Drainin' the lagoon. Goin' to lay in a new concrete bottom."

"How—how long will it take?" Homer breathlessly asked.

"Be finished tonight," the engineer said. He looked at his wrist-watch, yawned and shut the engine off.

"Well," he announced, "time for dinner. Hey, Joe! Luigi! Dinner!"

The two hipbooted men in the lagoon looked up at his summons, then came in. The three walked away, leaving Homer standing, staring at the engine. But Homer wasn't seeing the engine. He was seeing water being sucked down into a drain. Water, fish and Maysie. He knew what was going to happen. She would be sucked down into the drain and so into the sewer. Even if she survived being sucked through the drain, he knew she couldn't survive the sewer.

He walked up to the engine and looked at it helplessly. He was completely at a loss. The engine was a complete mystery to him. A hammer was lying on the grass beside the engine. A wild idea took hold of him. If he could only disable it. He picked up the hood and, taking up the hammer, began to beat whatever his eyes could see. As luck would have it, his first swipes broke off all the spark plugs and tore away all the outside wiring.

He laid the hammer down with a smile of satisfaction.

"That will halt operations for a while," he said to himself, "but I suppose they'll manage to repair the damage soon. I must think of a more permanent means of prevention."

Then he thought of Doctor Pithybottom.

"Of course! He is a member of the Park Board. Perhaps he can help me."

He lacked carfare to get to the Field Museum, so he started off, at a trot, for it.

DOCTOR PITHYBOTTOM looked up through myopic eyes at his visitor.

"My dear Homer!" he exclaimed, as he made out his visitor's identity. Then, seeing how agitated and worn the little man looked, he said:

"Here, man, sit down. What seems to be the trouble?"

"Doctor Pithybottom, you must help me!" Homer said.

"But of course I will," Pithybottom said soothingly. "What do you want me to do?"

"Listen, Doctor, there's a crew draining that small lagoon in Lincoln Park. I want you to stop them."

"But why?"

"Please, Doctor, stop them first. My story can wait."

Pithybottom looked at Homer for a few seconds then reached for the telephone on his desk. After he had spoken to several people, he hung up the phone and said:

"All right, Homer, someone will be out there to put a stop to the work."

"How soon?" Homer demanded.

"In about two hours."

Homer sighed, relaxed deeper into the comfort of the chair and fell asleep.

The old doctor smiled softly as he watched his friend sleep, then fell to examining the tiny fossil on his desk. It looked like the fossil of a small fish.

Homer opened his eyes and stared dazedly about him. Then he remembered where he was. The curator was still sitting at his desk. A single glance through one of the large windows told Homer several hours had passed, for he could see the sun was already descending. His eyes came back to Pithybottom. There was a look of deep sorrow on the old man's face.

Homer felt a twinge of pity for him.

"Thank you, Doctor," he said warmly, "but you seem to be troubled. Has

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anything happened to upset you?"

Pithybottom looked up and sighed deeply.

"Yes Homer, everything has happened! See this?" He held up the fossil.

Homer walked up and looked at it closely. He nodded his head.

"This came yesterday. It was included in a box of specimens which came in from the Aegean Sea."

"Then you've heard from your son?"

The doctor's eyes reflected the sorrow he felt. He said:

"No. The box had been in transit for over a year. The fossil had a note attached to it which said it was the fossilized remains of a mermaid. The note was signed by my son. The note also said that in another box in the shipment would be found the upper skeleton of this fossil. But I can't find the other box."

THE doctor stopped for a few seconds to collect his thoughts, then went on:

"You know, Homer, that I have always thought the old gods still exist——"

"They do, doctor, they do!" Homer broke in.

The doctor went on as though he hadn't heard Homer:

"And so because of this note, I staked my reputation and forty years of research on a gamble."

Homer looked wide-eyed at him.

"I told the board of directors what I thought. That this fossil was that of a mermaid. They said I was crazy. And I didn't have the upper part of the fossil. But I insisted I was right. So strongly, in fact, that I said I was willing to leave it to Professor Hornpalm, their fossil expert. He said it was the skeleton of a fish's tail. There was nothing else for the board to do. They asked for my resignation. Of course I gave it to them. So you see, Homer, you were lucky to find me here."

"Wait, Doctor! If you can prove there are mermaids?"

"What do you mean?"

Homer then told him the story of Maysie.

"And that's why I wanted you to stop those workmen from draining the lagoon," Homer said in conclusion.

Hope was lying bright in the old doctor's face. It proved he had been right all these years.

"Quick, Homer," he said, "let us go there. I must see her!"

He was already reaching for his Panama hat, when Homer stopped him.

"Wait, Doctor! Can you reach Professor Hornpalm? If you can, and if he'll come with us, then he will see her too. Then your reputation will be reestablished and even greater than it has been."

Pithybottom saw the wisdom of Homer's words. He was smiling happily when he completed his call to Hornpalm.

"He'll be here in an hour," he said.

Professor Hornpalm proved to be a dried-up, little old man with an irascible temper.

"Hrmph!" he grumbled as he came in, "what is this nonsense, Pithybottom? *Mermaids!* It's all poppycock! D'ya hear? Poppycock!"

Homer started to tell his story again but Hornpalm cut him off.

"Nonsense! No such thing! Let's not fool about any longer. Have things to do. Car's outside. Best be on our way."

IT WAS almost dark when they arrived. Homer saw that the hose and engine were gone. But his heart sank when he saw how much water had been

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drained before work had been stopped. A horrible tightness constricted his throat when he reached the little pool. It was empty of water, goldfish and Maysie. Then he realized that the drain was about fifteen feet from the shore. And that as the water drained off, Maysie swam with it.

Turning to the two old men beside him, he cried, "Come on," and ran into the water. Homer's excited mood was infectious. Without a word, the two leaped in after him. Homer was standing up to his chin in the water and was pointing to an area about three feet away. The water at which he was pointing was over six feet deep.

"Look!" he said excitedly, "she's down there. And she's caught in the drain."

The two old men peered nearsightedly to where he was pointing. They could see Maysie struggling vainly with something which seemed to hold her prisoner.

Without a word, Homer dove into the water. He couldn't swim and despite all his efforts to reach and help her, he was forced to come to the surface. Then Pithybottom dove in. But he, too, was unsuccessful. Again Homer tried but again he had to come up. He could see her staring up at him. Her lips were moving as though she was encouraging him. They were about to go down for a third time, when they were brought to a halt by a crashing sound in the underbrush. Then a bellowing voice was heard.

"Maysie! Dash it, girl, where are you? Maysie! Answer me!"

Then a figure broke through the bushes at the edge of the lagoon, and they saw who it was. A low moan of terror broke from Hornpalm's lips. And, not pausing for a second look, he began to run like mad for the safety of his car.

Homer and Pithybottom were too terror-stricken to move. They too recognized the figure. *It was Neptune!*

The staff of his trident clanged loudly against the concrete of the walk and his tail rasped as he advanced to the water's edge.

"Where is she?" he shouted to the two in the water. "Where is she? I know she is here. I heard her calling for me."

Homer silently pointed to where they had been diving. Neptune dove into the water and in a few minutes appeared. Maysie was held close and safe under his arm.

He swam up close to them and, rearing up before them, said in a terrible voice:

"So! You are the two responsible for this act against the gods. By Zeus' beard, I will spit you on my trident! D'ya hear?"

Maysie was pinching Neptune's arm, trying to gain his attention, but the Sea God was so angry he was paying no attention to her. As for Homer, he was too frightened to say anything. Pithybottom's knees were shaking so hard Homer could see the wavelets they were creating.

"B-but," Homer managed to stutter at last, "we were trying to save her."

Maysie at last managed to attract Neptune's attention. He bent his head to hear what she was saying. He listened for several minutes. Once he interrupted her to ask in a reflective voice: "You mean about Venus and——?" She continued until at last he looked back to the two men standing before him.

"Mortals!" he boomed, "my daughter tells me what has happened. My apologies to you. My apologies and thanks. But it is getting late and we have a long way to go. Therefore, goodbye to you, mortals."

And with that he started off toward the lake two hundred yards away. But

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Maysie, who had been observing Homer's woebegone expression, suddenly began to pinch him again. Again he bowed his head to listen. There was a broad smile above his white beard when he lifted his head again.

He swam back to Homer and suddenly lifted him up into the crook of his arm. Vertigo seized Homer. The world swam in dizzying circles before his eyes. Then all was as it had been before. That is, until Homer looked down to where his feet were. *They weren't!* In their place a fish's tail gleamed in the moonlight. Quickly he looked to where Maysie was being held. Her eyes bright with laughter. He noticed she was no longer tiny. And he knew now why he didn't want her to leave. He loved her.

Then as Neptune flopped off, carrying them, Homer whispered:

"You know Maysie, you are even lovelier than when you were smaller."

And Maysie said:

"And you're even cuter, Homer, than when you were *larger*."

TARZAN FANS— THESE "TARZANS" ARE REAL!

By AL HERMAN

TARZAN, the ape man, has assumed international significance through the comic pages. When he first made his appearance, many people were struck by the fascinating story of his origin, his life in the jungle, and his manners, language, and habits. Without further investigation of the Tarzan case, we know several things already about such "feral" men, men who were reared among animals away from human beings, or in a secluded or isolated spot without benefit of human environment.

Kaspar Hauser, born in 1812, was reared in a low, dark cell by a Hungarian peasant. It is said that he never saw the face of the man who placed his food and drink in the cell. His behavior upon freedom would be expected to be like the wild children, discovered by hunters, as the Hessian boy or the "girl of Songi" who at the age of nine came out of the forest like a wild animal. None of these "people" knew language; their habits of eating, resting, and sleeping were like those of wild animals; their knowledge of worldly objects was exceedingly meager.

Little is known of the previous life of these feral beings. Of course, in actuality, for a baby to survive, it must in its early years be cared for by human beings, and, therefore, considerable learning must have been acquired before it could survive in isolation. As one scientist wrote, "Tarzan is the creation of a fiction writer, not the product of the imagination of the sociologist, psychologist, or biologist."

One of the most interesting cases to illustrate the dynamic importance of human-to-human social stimulation is that of Anna, an American child. At the age of five, Anna was found by officers of the humane society wedged into an old chair in a room on the second floor of a farmhouse 17 miles from a small Pennsylvania city. She must have been confined to this room for a long time, and must have suffered physical restraint as well, for she was found in a limp, almost paralytic, condition—unable to move. When found, Anna was apathetic, her face expressionless, with no trace of a smile.

Soon, an account of her background was obtained. She was an illegitimate child, born in a nurses' home on March 6, 1932. Shortly thereafter, she was taken to a children's home, then boarded for a time with a practical nurse. Sometime later, before she was a year old, Anna was taken to her mother's home, where she remained until located by the humane society.

The society sent her to the county home, where she stayed for nine months. During this time, she became more alert, smiling, and laughing heartily, and taking a real interest in people around her. But even after this period, she could not stand alone, and appeared to make no progress in speech at all. Then Anna was removed to a private home, where she received much more personal and affectionate attention. Here, she soon learned to eat with a spoon, drink from a glass, and hold a doughnut in her hand and eat it. She became more alive and human in her actions, but still was very backward, being unable to speak, showing little curiosity and initiative, and not playing when alone. After much more study, Anna was found to be too severely retarded because of her early extreme social isolation. For a future as a "person," she was given little hope.

No more dynamic illustration can be given of the power of social stimulation in the human world!

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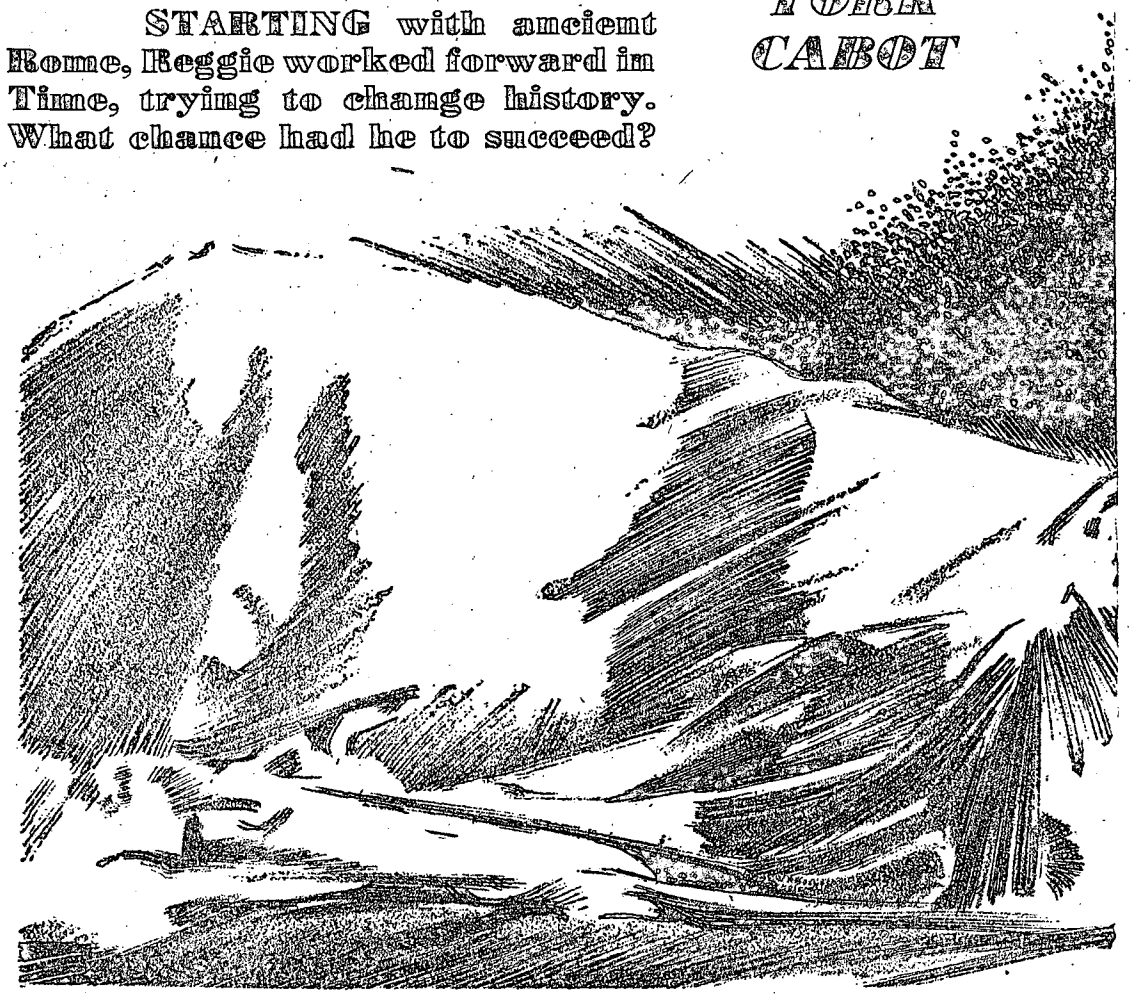
Time on your Hands

By JOHN YORK CABOT

STARTING with ancient Rome, Reggie worked forward in Time, trying to change history. What chance had he to succeed?



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She lifted her wrist and studied the watch with openly covetous approval

THE package had been sent to Reggie Vliet at his club. It had, upon being opened by that amiable young playboy, presented quite an emotional jolt. Shock and nostalgia had been the prime essentials of his emotions. Shock at the realization that old Lowndes was dead; nostalgia at the recollection of what the small object had once meant to him.

The small object was a watch. Lowndes' watch. An extraordinary timepiece which gave the wearer the astounding ability to flip back, very much in the flesh, into any page of any historical era he might wish to visit.

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The watch, in fact, was used to that advantage by Reggie himself several years previously. Used, thanks to the kindliness of the strange butler, Lowndes, to enable the young man to have a go at changing history.*

Reggie hadn't changed history on that occasion. But he had succeeded, through his prowlings through the pages of Time, in bringing back from history enough evidence to force the cold-blooded old colonel, now his father-in-law, to permit him to marry the girl of Reggie's dreams.

At the time of the arrival of this strange timepiece Reggie was, and had been for several years, thank you, quite happily married to that girl. Married so happily, in fact, that it seemed years since—upon returning from the historic past and winning the girl—he had given the watch back to Lowndes.

And now, as he gazed at the watch and remembered it all more forcibly than he had ever recalled it since, he realized also that the arrival of the timepiece signified that Lowndes was dead. For Lowndes had told Reggie, back then, that his present to Reggie and his bride-to-be would be a provision in his will which would pass the watch on to Reggie, should the eccentric old butler ever go the way of all flesh.

Reggie felt sad to think that Lowndes was dead. So sad, in fact, that he almost quite forgot the watch as he mechanically, idly, strapped it to his wrist and fiddled with the dial. The explosion in Reggie's bean followed with terrifying immediacy, and for a second he thought he was losing consciousness. Then daylight returned.

Perplexed, Reggie shook his head. He noticed then, with some surprise, that his head showed no indication of exploding again. He shook it again, cautiously.

"Well, anyway," he said aloud, "I'm not drunk."

Then he remembered his fiddling with the watch. His heart turned a triple somersault and didn't quite right itself. Something very funny was going on in his stomach and now his head *was* hurting!

HE STARED dazedly about a magnificent chamber. His brain was struggling to assimilate the evidence his eyes were presenting. It was monstrously unbelievable! Impossibly incredible! He shut his eyes desperately. It would all be gone when he opened his eyes. It *had* to be.

He opened his eyes again. A despairing moan trickled through his lips. Nothing had changed. The chamber was just as magnificent, just as real as ever.

Reggie began to tremble at the thought. The soft jelly-like surface of the wonderful bed trembled with him. He passed a hand over his suddenly damp forehead and noticed, for the first time since he had left the privacy of his club, the Time Machine strapped securely to his wrist. He peered at it closely. It was set for year minus one. Somehow it gave him a feeling of confidence.

If things got blackish he had merely to set the machine and Pip Pip! he'd be out of it. His nervousness began to fade away. His perky smile appeared again at the corners of his mouth.

He even felt a bit debonair, for he was still dressed as he had been in the library. Cutaway coat, striped trousers, buttonaire — neatly turned out.

Excitement and a delicious sense of adventure were stealing over him. He, Reggie Vliet, was again ac-

* See MAN WHO CHANGED HISTORY, *Amazing Stories*, February, 1942.—Ed.

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tually living in the past. He could enjoy it, relish it, admire it, and—change it. That was why he was here. To scramble the past, knock it off its customary track, blast it out of its time-worn groove.

The thought made him laugh delightedly. He thought of old Colonel Vanderveer, ancestry-ridden and heredity-conscious. Why, with an upheaval in history the old boy might turn up a beggar or a thief or a milkman or even a fifth columnist. Then let him object to the humble Randhope name. Reggie laughed louder. Why the old goat would probably be happy to have his daughter's name linked to the Randhopes, or anybody for that matter.

"Fifth columnist," Reggie chortled, "or maybe even a congressman."

So engrossed was Reggie with these entrancing visions that he did not hear the soft footsteps behind him. He was cheerfully oblivious to all but his own happy contemplations. But not so oblivious that he failed to hear the smooth, liquid voice at his side say:

"Greetings, strangely attired one."

The smile remained on Reggie's face through force of habit, but he started suddenly and toppled off the soft edge of the bed. He struck the floor in a confused heap of arms and legs and rolled over once. Then he climbed to his feet. The smile was still stuck on his feet like a mask. He turned slowly to face a dark-haired, puzzled-looking girl, attired in a loose, flowing white garment that did little to conceal her lovely feminine contours.

The smile on Reggie's face began to thaw. Then, when his lips were manageable again, it widened.

He smoothed his hair and straightened his tie. "I say," he declared, "they didn't exaggerate about you at that. You're all they said, er—Miss Cleopatra, and then some."

The girl's frown deepened. "Cleopatra?" Her smooth voice was doubtful.

"Er—yes." Reggie cleared his throat. "You are Cleopatra, aren't you?"

THE girl's eyes lighted and then she smiled, a brilliant flashing smile that had a couple of dimples and a lot of white teeth mixed together very attractively. "Cleopatra," she said, and gestured about the room.

Reggie beamed. "We're getting on, aren't we?" He took her hand and seated her on the side of the bed, slumping himself next to her. "Now, Cleopatra," he said briskly, "what's all this I hear about you throwing yourself away on this mug, Anthony?"

The girl shook her head and glanced fearfully about the room.

"Now just relax, Cleo," Reggie said soothingly, "maybe I was too blunt about everything. I mean, we hardly know each other." He smiled and she smiled back at him rather uncertainly. Reggie congratulated himself modestly. A plan was buzzing around his head. If he could eliminate Cleopatra and Anthony it might have terrific repercussions down through time.

He smiled again at the girl. It'd be fun, too.

"Cleopatra . . ." His voice held a muted throb. His eyes closed soulfully. "How I've waited for this moment. I've lived for it, dreamed and hoped for it for centuries. To see the beauty, the glory, the incomparable loveliness that is you and you alone. To be near the immortal woman, whose life has fired the imagination——"

Reggie opened one eye cautiously to see how it was going.

He looked closer at the girl and opened the other eye. Something was wrong. She was staring over his shoulder transfixed, completely oblivious to

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him. The Vliet pride suffered.

"After all," he said peevishly, "you could at least listen."

Reggie became conscious, then, of another presence in the room. It wasn't anything he could hear or see or smell. It was as if the very air had been charged with some electric force that beat against him in prickling waves. He turned slowly.

Standing before him was a woman.

"*Cleopatra*," he breathed. He knew it instinctively. Just as a person wouldn't need an introduction to Niagara Falls, so Reggie needed no introduction to this magnificent woman.

"I beg forgiveness, mistress," the girl alongside Reggie said tearfully. "I found him when I came to draw your bath."

Cleopatra made a slight gesture with her hand. Her eyes burned steadily into Reggie's. The girl slipped away.

Reggie loosened his collar with his forefinger and stood up weakly. Very brilliant of him, he thought dazedly. Making his torrid play for Cleopatra's maid. He noticed uneasily that Cleopatra had crossed her arms and was regarding him with a smouldering intensity.

"Warm, isn't it?" He loosened his collar again and smiled enthusiastically. "For this time of the year, I mean."

Her lips curved slightly. Reggie looked at her closely, his fascination temporarily over-riding his feeling of fearful awkwardness. She was not tall, yet she created that impression. It was something in the way she held her head. Her features were ordinary except for a curiously alive, vibrant quality about her mouth and nose. Her hair was a splendid, thrilling crown that sparkled like black diamonds as it cascaded in a tumbling stream down her back. But her eyes were a new experience to Reggie. They were green and then they were black and they danced and glittered like quicksilver. Reggie turned his eyes away and blinked. It was like looking too long at a flashing neon sign.

"It is warm," she said unexpectedly.

Her voice was clear and yet it was the type of voice that can purr at times.

"Oh, oh yes," Reggie nodded vigorously, "warm."

Cleopatra moved toward him. She wore a cream-colored, mesh-like garment that buckled at her shoulders and ankles.

Reggie backed a step, bumped into the bed and sat down. Cleopatra moved languorously toward him, seated herself beside him.

"Where are you from, strange one?" she asked quietly.

Reggie was puzzled about the language. Either she was speaking English or he was speaking Egyptian. Anyway, they seemed to understand each other and he was satisfied.

CLEOPATRA was waiting for an answer. Reggie's reeling senses were beginning to right themselves. "It doesn't matter," he said soulfully. "How I've waited for this moment. I've lived for it, dreamed and hoped for it for centuries. To see——"

"I have heard that before," Cleopatra interrupted him coldly. "That is what you told my maid."

"Not to mention half the senior class at Vassar," Reggie said brightly, and then checked himself. Maybe Cleopatra lacked a sense of humor. "The words have been burned into my heart," he murmured brokenly. He risked a quick look at her, and breathed with more assurance. He took her hand gently, holding his breath. She was looking at his wrist.

"What is that?" She touched the Time Machine with her finger.

Reggie swallowed. "It's rather a long

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story. I don't——

"Let me have it."

"Now, Cleopatra——"

"Let me have it."

Reggie hesitated, then removed the watch. It wouldn't hurt as long as he stayed close to it. Also Cleopatra didn't look as if she had a lot of patience.

Reggie watched her anxiously as she twirled it around on the leather strap. She made delighted, gurgling noises to herself which Reggie thought slightly out of character. Finally she slipped it on her wrist and held out her arm proudly, twisting it this way and that to catch the reflection from the light on its glistening surface.

"Very pretty," Reggie said diplomatically. "Now wouldn't you rather I kept it for you? Nice and safe, you know."

Cleopatra shook her head in a delighted negative. Her brilliantly lustrous hair swished back and forth past Reggie's face. He forgot about the Time Machine and captured her small soft hand.

"Cleopatra," he began.

"Cleopatra!" A mighty bull-like roar blasted through the room.

Reggie started. He heard heavy, dominant footsteps pounding closer.

"Cleopatra!" The tapestries billowed in the breeze.

The footsteps neared, a horrible sound of clanking armor accompanied them, and then a mightily muscled, flashing-eyed, beplumed warrior strode into the room.

"Anthony!" Cleopatra's voice exclaimed.

Reggie swallowed hard. Anthony was advancing ominously toward him. His cruel, predatory nose was outthrust like an eagle's beak. His eyes sparked with green fire. His mighty hands clenched and unclenched spasmodically.

"Glad you could make it," Reggie said feebly. "Heh heh. Not much of a party without Anthony, Cleopatra was just saying. Yes sir."

Anthony paused and looked at Cleopatra.

"Who is this scrawny creature?" he rumbled.

"No one to worry about," Reggie interjected hastily, "Just stopped off to see how you love birds were getting along. Can't really stay a minute longer. So pip pip! And all that."

Anthony's huge hand stretched out and fastened on Reggie's shoulder. "Not so fast," he said ominously. His eyes sought Cleopatra's. "Who is he?"

Cleopatra leaned back on the bed and stared at him through lidded eyes. "Since you are really concerned," she murmured, "he is nothing but a poor traveling peddler. Look!" She held out her arm, displaying the Time Machine. "See the pretty bauble I received from him."

"Now wait a minute," Reggie cried. "You can't have that. I need it." He struggled helplessly in Anthony's grasp. "Fun's fun," he said excitedly, "but give me back my—my watch."

"Silence!" Anthony thundered.

Reggie chose to ignore this excellent advice. With a shrill cry he lunged toward Cleopatra, his hand reaching desperately for the Time Machine, his only link with the future.

Something that felt like a fence post crashed into his head and he felt himself falling backward. Then something hard hit him in the back and Reggie knew he was on the floor.

"Guards!" he heard Anthony thundering, "take this man to the dungeons and chain him there! He attacked your Mistress!"

Reggie felt powerful hands on his arms, and then he was jerked to his feet. His dazed eyes focused on Anthony, the picture of rage incarnate, shak-

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ing a sword at him.

"You'll pay for this," Anthony bellowed, "you'll go to Rome to fatten our lions you miserable dog. I'll watch them tear you apart myself at the next arena games. Take him away guards. . . ."

Reggie looked from Anthony to Cleopatra, who stared silently at him, a faint smile curving her full lips. His eyes gazed dispairingly at the Time Machine on her wrist.

"Well," Reggie managed to croak, "all roads lead to Rome at that, don't they?"

Then something struck him on the head once more and he could feel himself being dragged away as a sea of darkness engulfed him. . . .

DURING the vague black nightmare of the next hours, Reggie Randhope regained consciousness momentarily at three separate intervals. On the first of these, Reggie opened his eyes to see that he was lying in what appeared to be the scuppers of an ancient sailing vessel. He was chained and shackled, and there were others beside him who were held captive in like manner. His clothes had been taken and he now wore a dirty toga. From the smell of fresh sea air, and from the nauseating lurching of the deck beneath him, Reggie gathered that he was somewhere at sea. It was gratefully that he swooned into unconsciousness again.

On the second occasion that Reggie opened his eyes, he was being tossed about on some great landing dock by men in togas. Tossed about without any regard for the finer niceties of his physical self. Strong, bearded men were doing the tossing.

Reggie had time to ask himself: "Can this be Rome?" And then someone failed to catch his hurtling, hog-tied body, and his head crashed into a dock piling, blotting out consciousness again.

And then, to a confusion of sounds, a bedlam of roaring voices Reggie regained consciousness again. Opening one eye slyly this time, he found that he was in some sort of a cart or chariot —still shackled. And opening the eye a bit wider, he realized that the roaring came from huge hordes of toga-clad citizenry lining a narrow street along which he was being carried.

The roaring throngs along the street seemed in a gay and festive mood. Laughing men and women, obviously citizens of Caesar's Empire, cheered and yowled, and threw things at the slowly moving chariot. One of these gaily hurled missives—probably a paving brick—came directly at Reggie, catching him on the forehead and blotting out consciousness for the third time.

It was not a bright and beaming Reggie Vliet, consequently, who finally came out of a fog of nausea and pain to find himself, no longer shackled, herded in the corner of what seemed to be an ancient locker room some hours later.

Looking through red-rimmed eyes, Reggie observed that the same haplessslooking, long-haired gentry who had been shackled with him all this while, were still clustered around him. Reggie realized, now, that these poor devils were probably captives like himself.

So he spoke to the ape-like, beetle-browed fellow who sat directly beside him. "Well," Reggie observed, "where would you say they've taken us now, chum?"

The ape-like fellow shook his head dismally. "We are in the prisoners' room of the great Roman arena, friend." He sighed deeply. "In a little while we will be thrown to the lions."

Reggie mused. "Well," he said at last,

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"I've heard more cheerful opening lines than that. Are you sure we'll be turned into lion food?"

The ape-like fellow shrugged. "Not all of us."

Reggie took heart. "Capital, that's more like it. Then there is a chance that we may survive?"

"I didn't say that," the ape-like creature declared gloomily. "I said that all of us won't be tossed to the lions. Some of us will be given a net and a dagger, and sent out to face the gladiators of Caesar's legions."

Reggie gulped. "Ugh," he shuddered. "But still, that isn't as bad as the other fate eh?" His voice became even more enthusiastic, optimistic. "There'll be a chance in combat with another human."

The ape-like fellow appraised Reggie dourly. "Me," he said at last, "I'm praying that I get the lions instead. They're quicker."

Reggie's optimism drained like soup from a leaky tureen. He paled. He had been trying to keep the cold facts from his brain. But now he knew it was useless. The stark, numbing terror against which he had been fighting, returned a ghastly wave of cold sweat. He trembled uncontrolably.

There was no way out of this. Absolutely no way at all. For Cleopatra, wherever she was at the moment, had the Time Machine strapped about her lovely wrist. Reggie thought of the somber Lowndes and cursed him roundly. And then, of course, he thought of Sandra. At which point an overwhelming wave of anguish and remorse swept over him at the realization that he would never see her again. And worse than that she would never know what had happened to him. She would never know that he, like some gallant knight of old, had risked everything to step back into the past thousands of years, to tinker with Time so that they could be wed. Perhaps she would forget him.

SO REGGIE wept in great emotion until he became so engrossed in a magnificent feeling of self-pity that he brightened somewhat. He swept aside the realization that he had never for an instant imagined he was running a risk when he'd decided to go back into the past. He felt suddenly and splendidly heroic.

"Reginald Vliet Risks All For Love," he declared. And the ape-like chap blinked in surprise at the words. And then from the corridor outside the prisoners' room, there, there came a clanking of armor and swords.

A huge bearded Roman sentry entered the room. Behind him were other huge and bearded Romans. The first glowered fiercely at Reggie and at the rest of the prisoners.

"It is time for the contests" he announced malignantly.

In the back of Reggie's brain, a plan was forming. It was but the germ of an idea, but it grew more and more developed as Reggie and the rest of the unfortunates were herded to their feet and out of the room into the corridor.

As they marched along the corridor under the close guard of the Roman sentries Reggie turned again to the ape-like chap. "What was it that they call these contests?" he asked.

"A circus," the chap replied. "A Roman circus."

"What subtle senses of humor these Romans have," Reggie observed. And then the pointed edge of a sword caught him in the seat of his toga and he increased his pace . . .

ALL the prisoners, including Reggie were grouped in a terrified band in one corner of the open arena. They had been this way for half an hour, while the chariot races concluded. It

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was an occasion, Reggie had to admit, of magnificent spectacles.

The place was jammed. If there had been mass cheering, and goal posts, Reggie would have felt certain that he had stumbled upon a Rose Bowl game. Any promoter would have given his remaining eye-teeth to have managed the gate on the crowd that was packed into this ancient stadium.

Then a Roman sentry stood before the prisoners. "Which of you swine," he inquired pleasantly, "would prefer the lions to the contest?"

There was an instant clamoring, as all the prisoners including the apelike fellow begged to be designated as lion meat for the afternoon's entertainment. Reggie blinked. Maybe there was truth and wisdom in the ape-like fellow's previous preference for the lions as against the gladiators. But Reggie held his ground. His plan entailed combat in the gladiatorial ring. He would go down fighting.

The Roman sentry frowned. "Are you all craven cowards? Will none of you face our gladiators? Do all of you prefer the lions?" Then his eye caught Reggie.

"Ahhhh, now," the sentry beamed ghoulishly. "Here's a brave fool!"

Reggie gulped uncertainly at the dubious compliment. Then he squared his slim shoulders, brushed his blond hair from his forehead, and stepped up. "You can give me a dagger and a net," he declared, his voice sounding surprisingly like someone else's.

The Roman sentry slapped Reggie delightedly on the shoulder. "A fine fellow. Somewhat puny—but courageous."

Reggie picked himself up from the ground, where the gay slap had knocked him, and grinned frozenly. He heard a voice—that of the ape-like fellow—hissing at him from behind.

"You fool!" warned his fellow prisoner, "it is a captive's right to choose what form of death he desires. Insist on that right. Choose the lions!"

Reggie weakened for but an instant. Then he squared his shoulders once more. "Give me a dagger," he ordered, "and a net!"

So while the sentry led him off to get his weapons, and an announcer in the center of the arena told the howling mobs that only one captive would face a gladiator, Reggie went over his sketchy plan again. It was rather simple, although he hadn't worked in the details as yet. Reggie had about given up all hope of getting out of this mess alive. He had also given up hope of ever returning to Sandra and 1944. This being the case, he had decided that there was but one thing to do—make a gallant and glorious end of it.

Reggie was here because he had dared to challenge history, because he had been foolish enough to endeavor to change it. And now he was caught, and there was no way out. But inside his fluttery heart, Reggie had made one vow. Before he left, before he died, he was going to alter history in some fashion. He would somehow justify his having come here. He would somehow embellish the name of Randhope on the pages of history before he died. *He was going to personally assassinate Julius Caesar!*

FOR Reggie had realized, even as he was being taken from the prisoner's room, that the great Caesar was always present at the Roman circuses. The great Caesar was undoubtedly here today, occupying one of the better boxes near the center of the arena.

Reggie had a hunch that, should Caesar be assassinated ahead of time, history would change completely

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through the rest of its pages. And after all, what did he, Reggie, have to lose?

"Nothing," Reggie told himself, while his thighs were strapped in protective leather. "Nothing at all. I'm a dead duck anyway." And then they put a dagger in his right hand, and a huge, cumbersome net in his left. Someone shoved him to the center of the vast arena, and the noise from the crowd was deafening—drowning out the knocking of the Vliet knees.

Reggie Vliet, Broadway playboy, stood awaiting the arrival of his gladiator opponent. Stood and shivered, a tiny dot in the center of the gigantic arena, while the mighty, blood-lusting voice of thousands roared buffetingly down upon him!

Sweat trickled down Reggie's brow, and the dagger-hilt in his hand felt slippery and damp, while terror drained his strength until he could scarcely hold the heavy net in his other hand.

"Perhaps," Reggie told himself beneath the roar of the multitude and the loud thumping of his heart, "perhaps I have been a bit hasty."

And then, to the terrific explosion of sound from the crowd, the gladiator whom Reggie was to face marched into the arena!

Reggie Vliet, gazing strickenly at the advancing gladiator, had but one impulse. He wanted to run like hell.

But the very blanket of bedlam from the crowd pressed in on Reggie like something alive, holding him rooted, terrified, motionless. Unable, even, to gulp away the cotton that had somehow filled his mouth. And the gladiator came warily, yet confidently, closer!

The gladiator was wearing a thick iron helmet that came down over his face, covering everything but his eyes. The eyes glared savagely from behind a metal visor, sending the blood running chill along Reggie's spine. Every vital part of the fellow's body was covered by thick iron armor, all except his arms, which seemed as thick and knotted as the trunk of oak trees. The gladiator was almost seven feet tall and, Reggie could swear, just about that wide.

Looking hysterically down at the heavy net in his hand, Reggie wondered what in the hell he was supposed to do with it. Perhaps, he thought wildly, he was supposed to hide behind it.

But it had holes. So Reggie discarded that possibility.

The gladiator was less than ten feet away. Reggie felt morally certain that he meant to pounce, and so promptly retreated ten feet, dragging his net behind him.

Reginald Vliet had faced irate traffic policemen. Reginald Vliet had braved the perils of cafeteria food. Reginald Vliet had even faced creditors. But he had never faced anything like this.

The roar of the mob, although climbing to an ever increasing pitch of wild confusion, was forgotten by now. Reggie had but one thought in mind, and it was basic: Self-Preservation.

There was something horribly business-like in the manner of the gladiator as he continued to advance. Something definitely frightened in the manner Reggie continued to retreat.

Reggie thought of dropping the net, but he found that his hand had somehow slipped through the mesh, and the thing was determinedly attached to him. While trying to free his hand, Reggie looked up at the gladiator, baring his teeth in a glare such as a rabbit might shoot at a boa-constrictor. But it had no effect. The gladiator

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continued to move cautiously inward.

The gladiator was so close to Reggie that he could see the lower—and exposed—half of the fellow's face. The part where the iron visor ended. The part revealing mouth and chin.

And if Reggie had felt squeamish about his immediate prospects of living, a moment before, he now had no doubt about the fate awaiting him. For that jaw protruding below the iron part of the visor helmet could belong to no one but a Vanderveer!

This menacing hulk, then, was undoubtedly one of Colonel Horatio Vanderveer's ancestors!

REGGIE squealed in terror, backing sharply away, still tugging at the net, cursing his inability to free himself from its meshing. The gladiator, the Vanderveer forebearer, bellowed once and charged in.

At precisely that instant, Reggie tugged desperately on the net. And in precisely the following instant, the gladiator, the Vanderveer, did a neat somersault and landed on his head. The net, over which he had charged, had flipped him over just as if it had been a rug jerked sharply from under his feet!

Roaring wildly into his ears, Reggie felt the tumultous applause of the galleries. Dazed, groggy, Gladiator Vanderveer was rising to his feet, a thin ribbon of blood trickling from his helmet.

Gladiator Vanderveer waved his huge sword in mighty arcs, making sounds like a maddened bull ape.

Reggie gulped, almost swallowing his tongue. "What is there about me," he whispered to himself, "that the males in the Vanderveer line don't like?"

And then, somehow, his hand was freed of the tangling net. Reggie wasted no time. He turned, dashing away from the trumpeting figure of the gladiator like a startled whippet. Reggie's hand had been freed, but not his feet. Seven strides, and his foot was jerked out from under him, spilling him to the ground. The net meshings had tripped him up!

Reggie's nose was in the dirt of the arena. A fact which wasn't enhanced by the blood that covered the ground, and the fact that his small dagger had been knocked from his hand in the fall.

And in that horrible instant, while Time held its breath, Reggie remembered his resolve. He had to get to the box of Julius Caesar. He had to mess up Time in some slight fashion before he was slain by the gladiator!

Reggie clambered hastily to his feet. He felt the hot breath of Gladiator Vanderveer on his neck and dodged quickly, as the gigantic warrior thundered by him. Then, looking wildly around, Reggie spied the gala trappings of an ornate box along the side of the arena. There were no other boxes decorated in such lavish fashion.

Instantly Reggie knew that if he were to get to Julius Caesar, he would find him in that box. Gladiator Vanderveer, probably Tiberius Vanderveer, had pulled up to a stop, panting like some huge elephant, and was heading again for Reginald Vliet.

Reggie streaked to the side of the Arena. Streaked for the gaily covered box where the dignitaries of Rome were watching. Behind him, bellowing terribly, followed Gladiator Vanderveer.

As he raced madly toward the box, Reggie realized that he would have to choke Caesar to death, inasmuch as he was now without his dagger. The thought was repulsive to him. He had never killed a man. But Caesar was due to die sooner or later anyway. And

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what the hell—this was Vliet's Last Stand, Reginald's Final Act!

Three feet from the box, Reggie broke his stride into a magnificent leap—which was definitely unsuccessful, since the box was a full ten feet from the ground!

Reggie had the infinitely painful sensation of badly barked shins and bruised elbows. Then he was flat on his back, gasping skyward, the breath knocked out of him completely.

And then a heavy foot landed on his chest, and he was gazing in terror at the glowering features of Gladiator Vanderveer who was looking down at him. Caught!

WHILE the crowds gave vent to their blood-screams, Reggie's swimming eyes brought into focus the gala-colored box for the first time. And for the first time, looking despairingly at the faces of those who sat there, Reggie saw that Julius Caesar was not present.

This was the payoff, the final irony. His mad dash, culminated by failure, and topped off by the fact that the mighty Caesar was absent — probably home with a cold!

Gladiator Vanderveer was making grunting noises, while bringing his heavy foot down again and again on Reggie's chest. And as gladiator thumped with his foot, he waved his huge sword and looked to the gaily covered box. And then Reggie remembered.

The gladiator was asking whether it would be thumbs up or thumbs down — an old Roman custom!

A girl rose in the box. Reggie had noticed her vaguely while searching for Caesar, but now her features became clear for the first time. She was Cleopatra!

It came to Reggie, in a sudden wave of horror, that as guest of honor in the arena, it was Cleopatra's privelege to point her pretty thumb upward or downward over fallen gladiatorial contestants. It was her privelege to say whether he would live or die.

Anthony was beside her, Reggie saw this too from his place on the ground. And Anthony, face black with wrathful scorn, was whispering in Cleopatra's ear.

"It isn't fair!" Reggie bleated muffledly. "Influencing a referee's decision!"

But obviously Anthony had done just that. For Cleopatra's pretty white hand lifted, thumb extended, *and the thumb then pointed sharply downward!*

The jerk of her hand was hard, sharp, positive. Death to Reggie Vliet, misplaced gladiator!

The voice of the crowd became a sudden wild scream.

Reggie closed his eyes, waiting for the sword to descend, to sever his head from his body. Nothing happened. Gladiator Vanderveer seemed to be hesitating. Reggie opened his eyes and saw why.

In Cleopatra's sharp gesture with her thumb, two rings and a bauble had slid from her wrist and fingers, had fallen to the dust of the arena. Gladiator Vanderveer, gallant to the core, had taken his shoes from Reggie's chest and was bending to retrieve them before getting them bloody with a death stroke.

Catching the gleam of the bauble which had fallen from her wrist, Reggie's heart turned cartwheels. It was the wrist-watch-like Time Machine. With a squeal, he was struggling to his feet, diving toward the gleaming, clock-like bauble.

He got his hands on it by a superb dive, like a halfback recovering a fumble. Got his hands on it as he heard Gladiator Vanderveer bellow in aston-

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ishment and rage. Reggie closed his eyes, turning the dial on the tiny Time Machine, pressing the button at the same instant.

He thought he heard the swish of a sword above his head, and then he felt that familiar dropping sensation.

The rushing, roaring torrent of sound swept around him instantly. For a shocked, split second he saw Cleopatra's deep liquid eyes widen incredulously. Then oblivion claimed him. . . .

WHEN Reggie opened his eyes again it was in strong sunlight. He blinked owlishly and peered about. He was seated on the summit of a grass-covered hill. At the foot of the hill, miles away, he could see a majestic city, impressive and mighty, sprawled under the clear blue sky.

Understanding came to Reggie in big chunks. He glanced quickly at his time machine, set for the year 410 A.D. It had saved him, with seconds to spare from the wrath of the Vanderveer gladiator.

Reggie shivered in the warm air. He thought of Cleopatra and Anthony and his sad failure to change the history of their lives. It occurred to him suddenly that they were both dead for centuries by this time. Dead, and already the history of their love had been recorded and nothing he or anyone else could do would change it.

"Pretty much of a flop on that deal," Reggie muttered to himself. "If I don't do better pretty soon I might as well give up the ghost. I've got only four more chances." He wiped his hand over his forehead and suddenly he started trembling. A horrible thought had burst upon him. He had almost been killed in the arena. If Cleopatra hadn't dropped the Time Machine right in front of his nose he'd have been a goner.

Reggie wiped his suddenly damp hands on the abbreviated toga he was wearing. It was all happened five hundred years ago but that was still too close for comfort. He climbed unsteadily to his feet, still trembling nervously from his narrow escape. He couldn't forget the fact, however, that he had failed. Failed miserably to reroute the course of history by so much as one historical inch. He was as far away from his goal as when he started back into time.

A great feeling of futility stole over Reggie as he thought about the Vanderveer gladiator, with the unmistakeable Vanderveer jaw. It was slightly encouraging to realize that the Vanderveer family tree had its share of sour apples but it was damned discouraging not to be able to do something about it.

Reggie squared his shoulders. The stern gritty stuff in him came to the fore.

"I won't miss the next time," he vowed grimly, "I'll disrupt things so badly that they'll have to rewrite *America's Sixty Families* from cover to cover to keep up with me."

He looked down at the magnificient metropolis spread out beneath him. Why — that's Rome, he realized excitedly. Mighty Rome, Mistress of the Mediterranean, Ruler of the known World, at the height of her wealth and power.

He wheeled and shaded his eyes with his hand. Off in the opposite distance from Rome his questing gaze was rewarded. There spread over acres of ground was a sprawling, barbaric camp. Even at that great distance, Reggie could recognize wild Asiatic horses, tethered in herds away from the numberless tents that dotted the ground.

Reggie trembled with excitement. He knew he was looking at the savage armies and retinue of Alaric, the mighty

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Gothic warrior, who had sacked and destroyed Rome in the year — his heart leaped — in the year 410! He remembered the date from his school days. It was said that the sacking of Rome and the dissolution of the Roman Empire was one of the most significant events in all history.

Reggie's heart began to thump faster. Supposing — supposing he could change that — prevent Alaric from sacking Rome? It would change the entire course of the world. Hope began to burn again in Reggie's heart. A change of such consequence would unhorse the Vanderveer's, for all time, from their snobbish seats of heredity and background.

Reggie spat on his hand and squared his jaw.

"Alaric," he muttered, "here I come!"

THE distance to Alaric's camp was farther than it looked, and, by the time Reggie reached its outskirts, the sun was dropping like a brass ball on the horizon.

Reggie approached the camp cautiously. He debated whether he should barge right in or whether it might be wiser to slip in quietly. Before he could make up his mind, however, the decision was taken out of his hands.

He heard a furious, hungry yapping behind him. He looked and saw two massive slavering dogs charging toward him, their blood-thirsty baying growing louder by the second.

A hero or an imbecile might have accepted their definitely unfriendly approach as something in the nature of a challenge to be faced and rebuffed; but, fortunately for Reggie, he was neither of the above.

He wheeled and ran. His torn and dusty toga stretched out behind him as his thin legs went into action. Down the short stretch leading to Alaric's camp, he raced. The baying grew behind him. Other mastiffs, entering the spirit of the thing, were joining the chase. Reggie risked a terrified glance behind him, saw that the drooling fangs of the nearest dog were but inches from his flying heels.

"Help!" he screeched. "Help!"

He was streaking into the camp proper now, a round dozen hounds yapping at his heels. From the corners of his rolling eyes, Reggie caught a confused blur of bearded men emerging from tents, weapons clutched in their fists. A crescendo of sound rose from the camp as the screams of the women and the yowlings of the dogs blended into a mad unholy cacophony.

In spite of his frantic efforts to remove himself from the dog's menu as a supper special, Reggie was able to realize that he had not chosen the most ideal manner in which to creep into Alaric's heart.

He glanced desperately over his shoulder. The dogs were almost upon him. It was at that precise instant that something gave way in Reggie's overworked knees. He wasn't conscious of falling. One minute he was racing along and the instant his face was plowing into the dust.

He heard shouts and angry barking intermingled horribly. He buried his head in his hands. "This is the fitting end for a hot-dog addict," he thought fleetingly. But the barks came no closer.

Reggie remained in his ostrich-like position for several dark seconds and then he cautiously raised his head. The dogs were a scant ten feet away, snarling and growling at him, but venturing no closer. Then Reggie saw the reason for this.

A tall, magnificent woman, dressed in a very unconcealing leather garment,

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was slashing at them with a short blunt whip and shouting angrily.

Reggie stared at her, fascinated. Muscles rippled up and down her bare back as her sinewy arm rose and fell the whip. The dogs were slinking away under her onslaught and Reggie didn't blame them.

In a matter of seconds it was all over.

REGGIE stood up and tried to brush himself off. A score or so of bearded barbarians watched him with impassive eyes but the woman who had driven the dogs away was openly curious.

"Where you from?" she asked with commendable directness.

Reggie looked into her strong handsome face and into her childlike brown eyes and smiled. "Oh, nowhere in particular." He glanced up the road he had just been chased. "Kind of sporty course you got here. Does everybody get a crack at it, Or is it reserved for specials?"

The girl spread her lips in imitation of Reggie's smile. Then she walked to his side and took his arm. "Come," she said, "I like you."

Reggie shrugged. It might be a good idea to ingratiate himself with this girl She might be some chieftan's daughter. "Sure thing, old kid," he said brightly He patted himself mentally on the back. This kid might be the daughter of Alaric himself. "Lead on," he said.

She led him to her tent. It was a larger tent than the others and was comfortably lined with cured pelts. Heavy bear- and wolf-pelts covered the dirt floor and in one corner of the tent a pot was suspended over a smouldering fire.

"Neat," Reggie said appreciatively, "but not gaudy."

The girl motioned him to sit on the floor and she turned to the steaming kettle and poured a ladle full of greenish soup into a copper bowl. This she placed in front of Reggie.

"Say," Reggie said, "what's this Alaric like?"

The girl looked at him intently and then shrugged her shoulders. "You will see," she answered listlessly.

"Now look," Reggie said, "what about this raid he's thinking of pulling on Rome? Is it all set?"

The girl's brow knitted. "No, no," she said. "No bother Rome."

Reggie smiled knowingly. "That's what you think. I happen to know it's going to be pulled off pretty soon."

The girl struggled to grasp his words. Then she shook her head again.

Reggie frowned, puzzled. History very definitely recorded the sacking of Rome by Alaric, yet this girl knew nothing of it. Maybe Alaric was the strong, silent type who kept everything to himself.

"When do I get to meet Alaric?" he asked between sips of soup.

"Soon," the girl answered, "he be home soon."

"That's nice," Reggie said abently, "but where's his home?"

"Here. Here home."

"Here?" Reggie repeated. "Why then you must be his daughter."

The girl shook her head. No. Wife."

Reggie strangled on a mouthful of soup. "Wife?" he sputtered. "Why didn't you tell me? What'll he think if he finds me here?"

The girl shook her head dolefully. "He won't like."

"Oh my God," Reggie cried. He scrambled to his feet. "Anthony . . . and now Alaric." He turned beseechingly to the girl. "What'll I do? You've got to help me."

He noticed a shadow, a large shadow fall across the tent.

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"It is late, too late," the girl said, sighing, "I like you too."

"You mean," Reggie babbled, "that——"

He wheeled as the flap of the tent opened and a heavy-set figure stalked into the tent. The new arrival was a squat, massive character with thick, inch-long brows and savage pig-like eyes. It was Alaric!

Reggie stared. Not at the powerful muscles, not at the savage, hot eyes but at something far more stunning, far more astounding.

He stared at Alaric's jaw. It was square and solid and massive. It was as wide and flat as a shovel. In short, it was a Vanderveer jaw!

"Incredible," Reggie breathed, "another Vanderveer."

ALARIC breathed noisily through a flat nose and his Vanderveer jaw hardened. His hot gaze swept from his wife to Reggie. They stopped on Reggie, riveted themselves there.

His huge hand closed over an ax in his leather belt.

"I kill!" he growled.

Reggie had never gotten along with a Vanderveer in his entire life and he was not exactly surprised at Alaric's lack of cordiality. Nonetheless, he protested. "Really," he said nervously, "you're being awfully hasty. Maybe we could kind of talk this thing over."

"Kill!" Alaric growled again, and this time his voice was trembling with rage.

Reggie had vast respect for the Vanderveer temper and he realized that he was facing the great-grand-daddy of all Vanderveer outbursts.

"Now——" he started, but he got no farther.

Alaric's arm rose in the air and at the same instant a strong pair of arms hurled Reggie to the floor. He squirmed his neck just in time to see the ax hurtle through the air and rip through the wall of the tent. Crawling to his feet, he dodged Alaric's first maddened rush. He ducked to one side and collided with the make-shift stove in the corner of the tent. The heavy kettle of boiling soup swung precariously. Reggie grabbed the handle to keep it from spilling.

He was in that position as Alaric rushed him the second time. Reggie was hardly conscious of lifting the kettle from the rack; hardly conscious of swinging it in a circle over his head and letting it fly.

But he was conscious of Alaric's maniacal screams some tenth of a second later as a gallon or so of boiling soup baptized him.

He was conscious of the girl pulling his arm, jerking him to the rent in the tent caused by Alaric's ax. "Go," she said tensely. "I think he might get a little mad now."

"You think?" Reggie cried, "I know!"

He scrambled through the hole in the tent and raced into the darkness. Back in the tent he could hear Alaric bawling at the top of his voice and he could hear shouts and cries arising from all sides, as the men hurried to the voice of their leader. Dogs, yapping and yowling, added to the din, but over it all he could hear the shrill terrified neigh of the wild horses.

It was toward this sound that Reggie hurried. The whole camp was aroused now. He could still hear Alaric's voice trumpeting like an enraged elephant. Flares were visible now, as the barbarians tramped about in search of him.

Reggie reached the horses not a second too soon. Three Goths rounded a corner and began bawling loudly as they sighted him. Reggie untied a champing stallion and vaulted onto its

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back. The horse reared and plunged like a demon but Reggie clamped his long arms around the animal's neck and clung like a burr.

"N—n—ice h—ho —— horsey," he panted into the jolting horse's ear, "t — take i — it easy."

Either the horse recognized Reggie's plight and decided to lend a helping hand or it just needed exercise for it suddenly plunged into the street, steadied its stride into a ground-eating gallop and left Alaric's camp like an arrow from a bow.

Reggie's heart felt a glow of hope, but seconds later it was thoroughly quenched. Risking his life and limb on a glance over his shoulder he saw a body of horsemen racing after him, and in back of them, he could see hundreds of shadowy figures mounting and preparing to ride. The whole camp was awakening. A harsh bugle signal sounded and Reggie's last glimpse of Alaric's camp showed him a scene of frantic and feverish activity. All for him.

"This is your party," Reggie told the horse desperately, "I'm just along for the ride."

IT was a ride he never forgot. Over the rutted narrow roads and through the thick knee-high grass his horse galloped swiftly; but behind him, Alaric's screaming horsemen inched closer and closer.

In a glance Reggie saw that Alaric was leading his men, mounted on a splendid white stallion. In that terrified glance Reggie could see Alaric's face twisted in rage and fury and he could see the infamous Vanderveer jaw clamped like an excavation shovel. The hoarse, savage cries of his pursuers brought the short hairs up on Reggie's neck.

Reggie licked his dry lips. He'd have to ride this one out. He could escape with his Time Machine but he'd lose forever his chance of preventing Alaric from sacking Rome.

The horse was laboring now as they charged up the grass-covered hill overlooking Rome. From its summit, Reggie had a panoramic view of the mighty city, gleaming palely in the moonlight. Then he was clinging frantically for dear life as his charger thundered down the side of the hill toward the slumbering city. Behind him he heard the savage screams of Alaric's hordes as they breasted the hill and charged down after him.

The rest of the ride was a jumbled, hideous nightmare, comprised of screaming barbarians behind him, a jolting bundle of dynamite beneath him and the sanctuary of Rome far ahead.

But miraculously, incredibly, he made it. With his horse trembling from fatigue and heaving with exertion, Reggie swept into a hard-packed boulevard that led into the heart of Rome. Toga-clad citizens stared wildly at him, and then fled in terror as they beheld the fearsome horde of barbarians who were pouring into the city like a wild flood.

Reggie dug his heels into the flanks of his mount and was rewarded with a last burst of speed. He charged toward the center of the city, aware that the yells and screams of the barbarians were growing fainter as he pulled away from them.

Thanking his lucky stars fervently, Reggie turned his mount off the main boulevard and raced up a side street that led to the outskirts of the city.

Everywhere he saw fleeing citizens, madly plunging horses, excited soldiers of the Roman legions.

Racing on, Reggie soon left Rome behind him. But he still did not feel secure, and it wasn't until he reached a small hill a mile or so from the city that

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he was able to relax and rein his spent horse. He slid from the horse, his knees trembling, his breath surging in and out like a tide. He mopped his damp forehead with a shuddering hand. "That," he said wearily, "beats anything Tom Mix ever did."

Then he looked toward Rome. His knees buckled at the sight.

Rome was in flames! Half of the city was burning and by the leaping flames Reggie could see the savage, bearded horsemen of Alaric, charging through the streets of the city, slaughtering, pillaging, burning everything in their path.

Reggie's knees gave way completely and he sank to a sitting position. The destruction was immeasurable; the holocaust was complete. Slowly to his stunned brain came understanding.

He was witnessing the sacking of Rome!

There could be no doubt of it. It was going on before his very eyes. This was the invasion and destruction of Rome by Alaric the Goth that history had recorded.

Reggie groaned, a heart-felt, heart-sick groan that came from deep inside him. For another sickening realization was forced onto his brain.

The sacking of Rome, that historians made so much of, was nothing but an accident caused by Reggie Vliet. Alaric had followed him into the city, but once there, his men had fallen on the inhabitants in barbaric frenzy.

Reggie shuddered. He was responsible for the sacking of Rome! If he had just left everything alone it would never have happened, the course of world history would have been different, the Vanderveer's would be different and Sandra Vanderveer would have been his.

On that tiny hill overlooking the burning city of Rome, Reggie's spirits sank to their lowest ebb. He had botched everything, so far, messed up the whole works. There was only one consolation that presented itself to his haggard hopes.

He still had, roughly speaking, sixteen centuries ahead of him, in which to change the course of world history. This thought renewed his confidence, flagged and fanned his expiring hopes, to a slight extent.

He looked at his Time Machine and his eyes gleamed. The fifteenth century looked promising. Reggie set the machine firmly, with determination. He looked down at the conflagration that was Rome and his lips tightened. A man couldn't be wrong all the time. Or could he?

Columbus," he muttered, "here I come!"

REGGIE set the machine unhurriedly. There was a new quality of deliberation and purpose in his actions. This popping about in Time had been something of a lark at first, something whimsical and comical; but now the Vliet mood had changed. Grim efficiency was replacing his former slipshodiness. The episode with Alaric had done something to him, made him see things in a new light. If he were going to succeed in re-arranging history he'd have to be more business-like about it. He had three chances left now. No more shenanigans, no more slip-ups. Efficiency? Pip pip! Pronto!

With this high resolve burning in his heart, Reggie's hand moved to the send-off button. "Columbus," he thought to himself, "your Genoese goose is cooked!"

Then he pressed the button.

The sensations of speed and sound enveloped him immediately. Blackness rushed in on him like a swelling tidal wave. Then—oblivion. . . .

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Reggie opened his eyes and beheld two beady eyes, set in a sharp brown face, stared down at him. Reggie blinked twice and then he saw that the eyes and the face were attached to a grinning, gnome-like man dressed in quaint comical clothes and a sweeping be-plumed hat. The ludicrous appearance of the hat made Reggie think wistfully of Sandra, and reminded him of the purpose of it all.

"What-ho," Reggie said by way of greeting. Then he sat up and peered around him. He was seated on what looked to be an unused wharf, facing a vast expanse of water. The sun was chinning itself on the horizon and its long brilliant lances of light were striking the incredibly blue water and glancing up into his eyes.

"Well, I'll be," Reggie cried in delighted recognition, "That's the Mediterranean. And this must be near Genoa, the home of Christopher Columbus."

He heard a shrill, spontaneous giggle behind him as he finished speaking. He turned and saw the comically dressed little man laughing uproariously. His monkey-like face was convulsed with merriment and tears of mirth were trickling down his brown cheeks.

Reggie scratched his head in bewilderment. "What's the joke?" he asked, slightly nettled. "What's so terribly funny?"

The little man stopped laughing long enough to wipe his eyes. "I am so sorry," he said, his voice trembling with supressed laughter, "but I cannot help it. You say Christopher's name and—here the little fellow's voice broke and giggles began to trickle from his lips—"and I cannot help it. I am so sorry." He began to laugh again, slapping his sides in unrestrained glee. "It is so very, very funny," he choked at last.

"Must be," Reggie said dryly. "Would you mind letting me in on it?"

"Oh I am so sorry," the little man gurgled, "I am being rude, no? My name is Guiseppe. And you, my friend are ——?" He paused.

"Randhope — Reggie Randhope," Reggie answered. "I'm from America."

"America?" Guiseppe pronounced the word gingerly and his brows knitted together in a frown. "Where is that?"

"Oh, I forgot," Reggie said. "You wouldn't know anything about that. It hasn't been discovered yet. And," he added to himself, "it never will be if I can get to this guy Columbus."

Guiseppe, he noticed, was looking at him rather queerly. Reggie's eyes dropped to his torn dusty toga and to his frayed Roman sandals. He smiled reassuringly. "Kinda silly clothes," he said. "Do you think you could find me something a little more appropriate?"

"You want to change your clothes, no?" Guiseppe asked.

"I want to change my clothes, yes," Reggie answered.

HE CRAWLED to his feet, then, and stood up. Looking around, he saw a small square, bounded by stone railings, and beyond that he saw Genoa. He knew it immediately. It was just like a scene from a costume movie. Crooked cobbled streets twisted their way through a maze of ridiculous pointed houses with narrow long windows. Early rising vendors and peddlers pushed their carts before them; and off in the distance, Reggie could see church spires rising against the cold blue background of the Italian sky. For a fleeting instant Reggie thought of the barbarian Alaric and his miserable failure to prevent the sacking of Rome. A feeling of discouragement, of futility grew in him but he shoved it resolutely from his mind. This was a new chance, a new world, and a new

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Reggie Vliet. He wouldn't fail, he couldn't. For Sandra and himself he must succeed.

"Never mind the clothes," he said firmly, "just lead me to this fellow Christopher Columbus."

"Please, p-please," Guiseppe's voice was cracking again, "that name—it does things to me. I can't help myself. Please—" His voice crescendoed helplessly into a shrill hysterical cackle. He doubled over, clutching his sides, his face reddening like a tomato. Finally, breathless and weak, he straightened up. "You must excuse me," he giggled, "but I am unable to control myself."

"So I see," Reggie said. "What's the gag? Why do you start laughing like a hyena when you hear that name?"

"I will try to explain to you," Guiseppe said, controling his voice with an obvious effort. "I will tell you why I laugh. I will tell you why all Genoa she laugh too. I will tell you and then, you and me, we will laugh together until we are too weak to laugh anymore."

"Go on," Reggie said uneasily. "I'll try and keep my head."

"All right, then listen to me." Guiseppe moved closer, a shadow of a laugh dancing in his voice. "This Christopher Columbus, he live here in Genoa all his life. He good boy. But listen, now, what he thinks. He think—" Guiseppe's hands pressed against his sides—"he thinks and he says and he argue with everybody that—that the earth, she is round." Guiseppe roared gleefully. "There I have told you. Is it not crazy? Is it not fantastic? This crazy boy cries that the earth is round and he says he will prove it. Is it not something to laugh at? Laugh, my friend! Laugh with all Genoa at this crazy Christopher Columbus!"

Reggie essayed a feeble grin. Then he chuckled. Then he laughed. Finally, transported by merriment, he sank to the ground, clutching his sides, laughing frenziedly at the ludicrous idea of a round earth.

"It's wonderful," he gasped, minutes later, "positively wonderful. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't heard it with my own ears."

"You see," Guiseppe gurgled. "I told you you would laugh with all Genoa."

"Yes indeed," Reggie chortled. "A round earth! the very idea! Why that's the most——" Reggie's voice died away, his smile faded. A sudden thought had occurred to him. The earth was round!

"Look, Guiseppe," he cried, "Columbus is right. We're wrong. The earth is round."

This sent Guiseppe off into fresh roars of delirious mirth. "You make good joke!" he cried, when the attack was over. "Very good joke."

"It's no joke," Reggie said glumly. "Now look, Guiseppe, take me to Columbus."

A thought was bobbing around in Reggie's head. If everyone thought Columbus was a bit touched for thinking the world round, it wouldn't do for Reggie Randhope to run around saying the same thing. Wouldn't do at all. He'd wind up in the local nut house with Columbus.

"Yes sir," he said "good joke of mine. This boy Columbus must be quite a card, yes indeed. Thinks the world is round, does he? Well sir, I'd like to meet him. Yes sir."

Guiseppe looked at him a trifle doubtfully, Reggie thought, but finally he bobbed his head. "I take you," he said, "I take you to this crazy Columbus who thinks the world is round." Guiseppe threw his head back and started laughing all over again. Reggie joined in heartily. . . .

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GUISEPPE led Reggie through miles of labyrinthine streets, past dozens of shops and dwellings, and finally stopped in front of a weather-beaten building with crooked windows and a sagging, worn-looking door.

"Columbus lives here," Guiseppe confided, "Go in. He is always happy to tell someone about his plans to prove the world is round. Even you," Guiseppe said, with another long glance at Reggie's curious raiment, "would be welcome."

"Well, thanks a lot," Reggie said. Impulsively, he stretched out his hand and clasped Guiseppe's. You'll never know how much this means to me." Then he turned and knocked on the door of Columbus' house. In a few short minutes the door was opened by a tall, moody, dark-haired young man, who stared glumly at Reggie. Reggie heard a chuckle behind him and he turned in time to see Guiseppe staggering down the street, roaring with laughter.

"What-ho," Reggie said to the tall young man. "Know anything about this chap Columbus?"

"I am Christopher Columbus," the young man answered sadly. "Who seeks me?"

"I do," Reggie answered. "I'd like to talk to you. May I come in?"

Columbus shrugged. Without answering, he stepped aside and Reggie entered the house. It was dark inside, but he could see maps and compasses strewn about a large table and various instruments of navigation attached to the walls. Columbus waved him wearily to a rickety-looking chair and seated himself on a stool before the long work table. He rested his chin forlornly on his hands. "What did you want to talk to me about?" he muttered unenthusiastically.

"Well, now—" Reggie hitched his chair a little closer—"it's about this nonsense of the world being round. I understand you've got some silly idea about that. First of all, I want to tell you that you're absolutely, positively barking up the wrong tree."

"What?" Columbus looked closer at him.

"Just a manner of speaking," Reggie said hurriedly, "let's get back to the point. The earth is not round. It can't be. Any fool can see that. Now, look. If the earth is round, it must have a top and a bottom. Now, if that were true everybody on the bottom of the earth would be standing on their heads. Now, seriously, doesn't that sound pretty ridiculous?"

"But the sails disappear over the horizon," Columbus cried. "How can you explain that? Oh, I'm so confused and discouraged. Maybe you're right. The whole world can't be wrong. Everyone has laughed at me and derided me ever since I first conceived the dream of a western route to the Indies. It is not possible that I am right and everyone else is wrong. But ——" Columbus' eyes traveled longingly to a large map pinned to the wall. "Will I never know what mysteries lie behind the horizon of our own knowledge?"

"Don't worry about those things, Chris old boy." Reggie hurried on, taking advantage of Columbus' disheartened attitude. "Pick out a nice cuddly girl for yourself and settle down here in good old Genoa. Your friends are here, your family is here and you couldn't find a better spot on the globe to raise your own family. What do you say, Chris, forget these wild ideas of yours and put your roots down here."

Columbus stood up and clenched his fists. His eyes focused on the huge wall map with a burning glare. "You have decided me," he whispered tense-

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ly. "My work has been a tragic failure. I go now to the dock."

"You mean," Reggie said hopefully, "you're—you're going to end it all?"

Columbus threw a coat over his shoulder, placed a be-plumed hat on his dark head. "Accompany me," he said darkly. "You will see what your words have done."

Reggie jumped to his feet. "I'm sorry you feel that I've driven you to commit suicide, Chris; but maybe it's the best way after all."

COLUMBUS jerked open the door and strode into the morning sunlight, Reggie trotting happily at his heels. Through the now bustling streets they moved swiftly. Reggie was experiencing the delightfully intoxicating elixir of success. He felt a slight pang of conscience as he looked at Columbus' youthful, brooding, determined face but he shrugged mentally. You couldn't change history without causing a little trouble along the line. The thought that he was to be present at Columbus' suicide buoyed him up, filled him with a sense of importance.

"I think you've got a great idea," he said breathlessly, as they wended their way through the crowds. "Just don't change your mind, that's all. After all, it will all be over in a few minutes."

Soon they were nearing the water front. Columbus' strides were longer, his jaw harder as they marched side by side down the last hundred feet that separated them from the blue water. There was a small ship just embarking from the dock and a small crowd of cheering Italians waved and shouted on the dock. Through these, Columbus shoved his way, with Reggie bringing up the rear. Columbus turned at the edge of the dock, gripped Reggie's hand. "Goodbye," he said. "Your words have done this to me. Your words have given me the courage to face death itself."

"Well, old boy," Reggie said cheerfully, "hurry along, don't waste any time y'know. Make up your mind and strike while the iron is hot. Pip! Pip! old fellow."

"Farewell!" Columbus said sorrowfully. Then he wheeled swiftly and jumped — a long, arching jump that deposited him with a thump on the deck of the departing sailing ship!

Reggie's mouth dropped open. "Wait a minute!" he yelled. "You can't do that. Where do you think you're going?"

"To Spain," Columbus shouted exultantly, "to borrow money from Isabella. My success I will owe to you. When you referred to this earth as a globe, something in my mind came alive again. I started for the dock, but without your encouragement I would have turned back, as I have on countless other occasions. Thank you, noble stranger, and may you be blessed to the end of your days."

"Come back!" Reggie yelled frantically. His mind was a wild malestrom of despair and chagrin. Columbus was leaving, escaping to borrow the necessary money from Isabella. Reggie acted with the desperation of an inspired fanatic. He dashed back into the crowd, wheeled and raced for the edge of the dock.

"You won't get away from me!" he yelled. Then he was flying through the air. It was a noble effort, a splendid, magnificent effort. His thin body hurtled through the ozone, the tattered toga flying behind him like the tail of a kite. His grasping fingers, distended like the talons of an eagle, grabbed for the rail. Grabbed — and missed!

Reggie clawed frantically at the side of the boat. But it was a futile gesture. The next instant his twisting body

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dropped with a painful splash into the murky water.

Reggie's first sensation was a bitter galling sense of failure. His next was hardly more comforting. He couldn't swim! He realized that as he sank for the first time. It was demonstrated to him as he sank for the second time. Sputtering, gasping, strangling, Reggie started down for the third time.

With his last desperate strength he groped for his Time Machine. He tried to set the machine for the Revolutionary War but his eyes were filmed with water and he could hardly see his hands. He was sinking into the greenish water as he made the last frantic adjustment. Then he pressed the button. A pounding, roaring noise filled his ears but whether this was heralding his escape or his death he didn't know. Then a smothering blackness descended upon him. . . .

THE black, whirrling feeling of flying through Time had become common to Reggie, and so it was without surprise or shock that he woke to find himself reclining on the the floor of a long veranda.

It was night. The cold gloomy blackness that settled over him matched the condition of the Vliet soul. He sat up and tasted the ashes of despair and futility in his mouth. Off a way, he saw an ice-locked river glinting in the moonlight. It was, he knew, the Delaware and that meant that he was now in Trenton during the Revolution.

"Trenton," Reggie muttered. "Bah!"

He glanced at his Time Machine. If the thingamajig was still working, he must be right in the thick of the Revolutionary War. Reggie thought about this for a while. The Revolutionary War was quite a biggish thing in history. And he hoped to fix it so England would win instead of ——

"Oh, what's the use?" he groaned.

He had botched everything he had touched, so far. Anthony and Cleopatra! Alaric! Chris Columbus! He had tried to change the history of these immortals and had merely *made* history.

He was a hopeless, dismal failure. He had lost Sandra through his own sloppiness and inability. Still — the thought buzzed in his head like a persistent gadfly — there was yet a chance for him if he could disrupt the course of the Revolutionary War. If he could do that — the Randhope optimism was rising to the fore — it might rectify all his past mistakes.

Reggie stood up, his cheeks flushed. "Try, try again," he whispered jubilantly to the darkness. Peering about, he saw a pair of swinging doors a dozen feet from him. A pale flickering light shone through these onto the floor of the veranda. Listening closely, Reggie could hear muted voices from within the structure.

He still wore his tattered Roman toga. Entering the house cautiously he discovered a hall clothes closet. Fumbling in the dark he found clothes and donned a suit blindly. Then he reentered the hall.

Reggie squared his shoulders, strode to the inner doors, shoved them open and entered. In spite of the poor illumination, Reggie could see that the room was large and well-furnished. A half dozen soldiers who were l o u n g i n g against the wall sprang to their feet and saluted smartly.

"My General," one of them said breathlessly, "we did not know you would make an inspection on Christmas Eve."

Reggie tried to cover his surprise. "Well, now, didn't you?" he said. "And what made you think I wouldn't?"

The soldier, a phlegmatic, stolid fellow peered closely at Reggie. "What

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is this?" he muttered. "You are not our commander, yet you wear the uniform of a general."

Before he finished speaking he had grabbed Reggie by the arm and dragged him uncermoniously into the circle of light cast by the one lighted lantern in the room.

"Comrades," he exclaimed. "This man wears the uniform of *France!* What does this mean? Rumor has it that France is ready to declare war against England."

There was a ominous growl from the men encircling Reggie.

"Now, just a minute," Reggie put in hastily. "Who are you fellows?"

"We are Hessians," their spokesman answered, "fighting in the cause of England. The report is being circulated that your government, the Government of France, is ready to throw their aid to the colonies in their fight against England. If that is true, then you must be a spy. The penalty for that you well know."

REGGIE glanced about the circle of unfriendly faces. Everything he did seemed to get him into more trouble. It was the only thing he did well. But the realization that almost all of his stopping places in Time had been used up, put new starch in his back-bone. This was his fourth stop. He only had five. He was perilously close to the end of his rope. If he didn't pull the cat out of the fire they'd be throwing him into it.

"Listen, boys," he said, in what he hoped was a chummy tone of voice, "if I were a spy, do you think I'd come marching in here like this?" Taking advantage of their momentary hesitation he rushed on. "And furthermore, that talk about France helping the colonies is a lot of bunk. As a French officer — I can say that with authority."

The soldiers appeared doubtful. "If what you say is true," one of them put in, "it is the first encouraging news we have had since we were torn from our homes months ago. We hear so many depressing rumors and always there is the General Washington to scare us out of our wits. We do not wish to fight but we are made to. That is why we are so gloomy this Christmas Eve. Instead of fun and frolic, we wait for Washington to strike. And if he doesn't Cornwallis will make us smoke him out." The soldier shuddered. "To smoke out Washington is like trying to drive a tiger from his cave."

"I know what's the trouble with you fellows," Reggie snapped. "You haven't got any spirit. No morale. What's the matter with you? You're quitting before you've started to fight. You haven't got that old college try in you."

Reggie realized, even as he spoke, that he had hit the nail on the head — but definitely. The only thing wrong with the soldiers fighting for England was that they lacked spirit, courage and zip! England had been defeated — or would be defeated — by that very lack of enthusiasm and morale. Why, this was going to be a snap! All that was needed was someone who could inspire and encourage these gloomy, spineless Hessians. Once that was done, the war would certainly take a decidely different turn. Reggie rubbed his hand in anticipation. He, Reginald Vliet, was just the boy for that job.

"Now look, boys," he cried jubilantly. "The team that won't be licked can't be licked! Remember that! You're not licked! You can't be licked! Let's have a little spirit, now. Turn up the lights, bring out the wine. Let's have a real celebration in honor of the victories to come!"

Reggie had not served his trick as a

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college cheerleader in vain. His words brought new life to the weary, despondent mercenaries. Their mouths split wide in confident grins and they crowded about Reggie, slapping him on the back and cheering into his ear.

Lanterns were lighted, wicks turned up and the gloomy shadows of the huge room receded into the corners. Along one wall, Reggie beheld a sight that brought a delighted gleam to his eye. A magnificently carved and heavily stocked bar!

"Hurray for Christmas!" Reggie shouted. "The drinks are on the house. Get your friends, come one, come all!"

The soldiers surged to the bar and soon bottles were passing from hand to mouth and the sounds of raucous merriment were swelling in a happy chorus to the ceiling. More soldiers, attracted by the sounds of gayety, poured into the room and soon it was jam-packed with happy, wildly cheering Hessians.

Reggie, obeying a strong but nameless impulse, climbed to the top of the bar and executed a neat, unrestrained clog dance. For some reason he felt wildly happy. Maybe it was the bottle of brandy that he had drained, or maybe it was the realization that he was finally succeeding in his task of rearranging history. He beamed proudly upon the lustily singing Hessians. With this kind of spirit and enthusiasm they couldn't be stopped. They'd make short work of the colonists, and then the whole outcome of American history would be changed and Sandra at last would be within his reach.

"Have a drink!" he bellowed happily. "Jush a lil' drink to lil' Sandra."

"To lil' Sandra!" the Hessians chorused, delighted. "To lil' Sandra."

THE bottles were dropping to the floor now as the men drained them and clamored insistently for more. Reggie jumped behind the bar and dragged case after case of dusty, spider-webbed bottles, forth, setting them within reach of the straining hands. He crawled laboriously to the top of the bar again, a fresh bottle of brandy in his hand. It was the most delightful beverage he had ever tasted. Smooth as silk and strong as steel.

"Yippeee!" he yelled. "Hurray for Princeton!"

Somewhere, men were shouting, but it was a vague, blurred echo that drifted into the hall of merriment. Reggie started to dance again, but this time something was wrong. His legs were each apparently possessed with a mind of its own, with a very firm and diametrically opposed conviction as to how this dance should be executed.

"My calves," Reggie punned drunkenly, "are mooin' at each other!"

This, he thought, was pretty funny, and its poor reception irritated him. He shouted something over the din of the mob and then he was lying on his back on the floor, tangled in a mass of happily threshing legs. Struggling to his feet, Reggie pieced events together.

"Why," he thought angrily, "I must have fallen off the bar."

"Somewhere in his dive, he had lost his bottle, so there was nothing to do but fight his way to the bar and uncork another. This he tilted and tried to drain at a gulp, but at least a pint of the strong liquor splashed down his braided chest.

He sagged against the bar and stared moodily about the room. Some of the noise was dying out as the soldiers collapsed against the wall in drunken weariness. Others sprawled on the floor, still nursing bottles in tight grips.

The shouting he had noticed was growing louder, and suddenly the swinging doors crashed open and a breathless

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sentry stumbled into the room.

"To your stations!" he shouted. "They're coming. Up, do you hear me? The colonists are coming across the ice. Get on your feet! We must be ready to face them!"

A loud chorus of jeers and hoots arose from the drunken soldiers.

"Go 'way!" one of them bawled. "We're goin' win thish war, y'hear? The team that won't be licked won't be licked, I guesh. Have a drink to lil' Sandra."

"To lil' Sandra!" the Hessians bellowed, "to lil' Sandra!"

"To lil' Sandra," Reggie added, somewhat solemnly. "For she's a jolly good—" he stopped to throw his voice into high, then continued— "fellooooooooow, which noooobooody can denyyyyy."

"I tell you, they're coming!" the sentry cried distractedly. "Get to your battle stations, or all our supplies and munitions will fall into the enemies' hands!"

One of the Hessians started to cry softly. *"Auf wiedersehn,* little munitions, we will miss you."

The sentry, with one last wild look at the sodden, slumbering Hessians, fled from the room.

Reggie shrugged. Then, unable to stifle his drunken curiosity, he staggered across the floor, stepping gingerly over the recumbent Hessians.

He collapsed against the door and lurched through onto the veranda where he sprawled helplessly on his face.

"Must've tripped," he muttered, as he crawled laboriously to his feet. Straightening his hat on his head, he peered foggily toward the river. Dozens of figures were climbing out of beached boats and assembling themselves in military formation on the uneven, ice-locked shore.

REGGIE blinked and passed an unbelieving hand over his eyes. The soldiers were shouldering their muskets and marching rapidly toward him. By the pale light of the moon, Reggie had a clear view of their leader.

A staunch, stout figure with a stern, noble face framed by long white hair. He wore the uniform of a commander and in his right hand he carried a sword.

Reggie staggered back as if he had been kicked in the stomach by a Kentucky mule. For he knew who the grimly determined leader of the colonists was. He knew—and the knowledge turned his knees to jelly—that he was none other than the Father of the United States, George Washington!

Other facts were coming to him. This was the famous Christmas Eve raid on the carousing Hessian soldiers at Trenton. This was the historic night that Washington crossed the ice-locked Delaware River and plundered the English storehouses of munitions and supplies. Munitions and supplies that were to give the revolutionary forces new life and courage and enable them to eventually fight the English to a standstill.

Reggie thought of the drunken, helpless Hessians, made drunk and helpless by that prize ass of all ages, Reggie Randhope! He thought of what they might have done to repel the troops of Washington if he hadn't gotten them blindly drunk. Tears of despair oozed from his bleary eyes and trickled down his cheeks.

The soldiers of the revolution were closer and suddenly Reggie realized his own danger. For a moment he was tempted to remain where he was and be shot for disturbing the peace, or something, but he thought of Sandra and changed his mind. She, poor deluded girl, was depending on him. He had wasted four of his precious oppor-

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tunities in Time, and now only one remained. One chance to change the history of the world. If he failed in this last attempt, everything he held dear would be irretrievably lost.

Reggie wheeled and ran staggeringly along the veranda, plunged over a low railing and landed up to his neck in prickly bushes. Extricating himself, he staggered along the side of the house as muskets began to explode behind him. Balls blasted past his head singeing his hair with their passage. But, miraculously, he rounded the last corner in an unperforated condition. His eyes, handicapped by the fumes of brandy, tried vainly to penetrate the darkness. He was searching for the stables—there must be stables. Where his eyes left off, his nose took up. It guided him, weavingly but unerringly, to the horses.

Revolutionary soldiers raced around the corner of the building before Reggie could climb onto a horse. They advanced cautiously, holding their fire until they could gain a clear, unobstructed shot at their target. Reggie experienced a foggy sort of terror. With his last sober strength he climbed awkwardly to the bony back of a horse. Then he slapped it wildly with his hat. The animal bolted forward like a shot from a cannon. Reggie saw something flashing toward him but he didn't duck in time, A beam of the stable struck him a stunning blow across the head, and the next instant the floor smashed him athwart the skull. He rolled aside frantically as a slug blasted into the floor next to him. He could hear the triumphant shouts of the colonists as his hand groped for the Time Machine.

He spun the indicator wildly, while his mind sought for an idea where he might go to make his last bid for a chance to change history. But the sight of a uniformed member of the Continental Army, his bearded face twisted with satisfaction as he drew a bead on the Vliet right eye, was too much for Reggie. Already the soldier's heavy forefinger was tightening on the musket trigger.

Heedless of the pointer's location, he pressed the button on the watch—just as the roar of the musket filled his ears with thunder and his eyes with fire. There was a prolonged sensation of falling, and Reggie Vliet knew no more. . . .

CONSCIOUSNESS returned to him very slowly on this occasion, and there was a horrible, throbbing ache above his left ear that had not been there before. He was lying on his right side on a brown carpet with a very thick pile, and there seemed to be a conglomeration of metal wheels and springs and shattered glass about him.

There was but one thought in his mind by the time he had recovered sufficiently to think at all. "This," Reggie muttered, "is my fifth chance—my last chance! If I fail to change history this time, Sandra is lost to me—forever!"

"He's coming around," said a shaky, masculine voice.

Something cold and wet—very wet—enveloped the pain above his left ear. And then a slim, very lovely, brunette girl dropped to her knees before him, holding a dripping towel.

"Oh Reggie, darling," she gasped. "Are you all right?"

It, Reggie realized with a pang, was Sandra Vanderveer!

"No!" he said loudly. "It's all *wrong*, darling! I've made a mess of everything! The five chances are gone! I haven't changed history, Sandra; now we can never be married!"

"But Reggie," wailed the girl. "We *are* married!"

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"Hunh?"

"Oh, you poor dear! That crack on the head knocked what little sense you —— I mean," she corrected hastily, "that it—it . . . well, I'm going to sue this club for a million dollars! Letting a heavy grandfather's clock tip over and fall on one of the members . . ."

And then everything was crystal clear to Reggie Vliet. Why, of course! Sandra and he had been married for years. That blankety clock had finally tumbled down from the landing leading to the club's second floor, just as he had often predicted it would. And of course, he *would* be the one it struck! That, too, would account for the pile of wheels and springs around him.

Several pairs of hands helped him to his feet. Reggie teetered there uncertainly, while his newly formed explanation for his recent journey into the past began to totter.

For Lowndes' Time Machine actually *was* strapped to his wrist! And he *had* fumbled with the mechanism; *had* pushed the button that operated it.

The falling grandfather's clock had nothing to do with *that* fact.

"Do you feel all right now, my sweet?" Sandra was saying solicitously. "I suppose it's all my fault," she babbled on, "for being so insistent that you meet me here at exactly five o'clock. I was so emphatic that it be five, and not a second later, that you arrived here an hour ahead of time so's not to disappoint me. . . ."

Five, thought Reggie. Five. Five. And he had had only five chances of changing history, thereby winning Sandra. Had his clock-stricken brain seized on that number and woven it into the weird dream he had just come through?

"But the Time Machine!" he said, loudly and violently. "I pushed the button. I *must* have gone back in Time. It couldn't have been a dream!"

Sandra's worried blue eyes regarded him tenderly. "You'll be all right soon, darling. Please stop babbling. . . . Why, R e g g i e!" she exclaimed suddenly, "where in the world did you get the odd wristwatch?"

BEFORE Reggie could prevent, she reached out and took hold of his arm, bringing the watch to where she could see it more clearly.

"It's certainly a queer looking timepiece," she continued. "What's this little button here?"

In utter horror, Reggie watched her set a finger on the button.

"No, Sandra!" he tried to scream, but it was hardly more than a croak.

Too late! Under the finger's pressure, the button was already fully depressed!

And nothing happened!

In the brief period of stunned silence that followed Reggie's choked protest, the young man dazedly lifted the Time Machine to his ear.

It was supposed to tick. All the time. But it was silent.

So gusty was the sigh of relief that swished between Reggie's parted lips that the frills on Sandra's waist wavered in the breeze. With a quick motion he slipped the watch from his wrist and dropped it into a pocket.

"Now, darling," he said crisply, "let's get on with this five o'clock appointment you're so keen about."

"Oh Reggie!" gurgled Sandra, relieved. "Now you're acting like your old self again!"

"Righto." Reggie tucked her tiny hand under one of his arms and they started toward the club's outer door. "Shall we be off?"

Speaking for you," Sandra said, "I hope it's no further off than usual!"

"Pip pip!" said Reginald Vliet.

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Dora was two tons of grief.
But the real sufferer was Funk,
who must find Oscar, her mate

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FREDDIE FUNK'S FORGETFUL ELEPHANT

By LEROY YERXA

TRUJU, wrinkled by long years in the steaming jungle, sat cross-legged on a mahogany log and stared at Dora. Dora was all washed up. As an elephant, she was a hulking mass of wrinkled leather and broken heart. Dora sat on her haunches, small red eyes brimming with tears, trunk drooping pitifully.

Her ears flapped dejectedly at a passing fly and two tears overflowed and rolled down her trunk.

Together, Truju and Dora transported logs from the Rajah's jungle to his mill. Thus far they hadn't moved a log all morning. Dora just wasn't up to it.

Truju had considered the problem from every angle.

"You one sad elephant, huh?"

Dora nodded sadly. A fresh batch of tears welled up and a moan escaped her mouth.

"You like to see your boy friend in America?"

Dora's eyes brightened and the curling trunk moved up and down quickly. She trumpeted. It wasn't loud because, as nice as the trip sounded, she knew she didn't have a chance in the world of really going. It was just some more of Truju's peace talk.

Truju sat motionless for a long time.

Truju fingered his lip and thought it over. "Best thing to do," he told Dora, "is to send you to Chi-ca-go!"

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"I got magic talk," he said at last. "I don't know much about America. They took Oscar to Chi-ca-go. You want to go to Chi-ca-go?"

Dora shifted her weight carefully and came to all four feet. She pushed her trunk out carefully and nosed Truju with it.

Truju smiled.

"You listen close now. Oscar say he go to a field. He call it field mu-see-um. You can find, in Chi-ca-go?"

Dora did a cumbersome little dance, lifted her trunk to the sky and trumpeted loudly.

"Good!" Truju leaned forward. "This afternoon you go to hunt in jungle with Rajah on back. I make magic spell now. When you deep in jungle, stomp earth three times and trumpet two times. You be in America."

Dora was overcome with joy as Truju contined:

"When ready to come home, do same thing. You can remember?"

Dora didn't even hear that. She was already, at least in spirit, entwining her beautiful trunk around Oscar's, and listening to affectionate little grunts from her boy friend.

IT WAS a bright, summer morning in Lincoln Park. Freddie Funk, whistling an off-key rendition of *Love In Bloom,* left the bus near a grove of trees, and started walking across the grass. Freddie's mind was in tune with the morning. He had a commission to do a landscape painting. Nice day, pleasant assignment, and most important, more cash to support his ration points. Last week he had thought he might have to eat the points themselves, without gravy.

Mr. Funk found a pleasant spot close to the lagoon, put his materials on the grass and prepared for work. However, his luck was not to last.

While deep in the task of choosing a proper color of blue for the sky, he noticed the wind was growing stronger. He tried to ignore it, but found his own whistle dying in the approaching storm.

His first thought was to make a quick dash for the zoo, but the rain caught him before he could move. With an arm full of hurriedly gathered paints, and a heartful of hate for the Powers that be, Freddie Funk stood under a huge elm tree and watched the first rain drops hit the sod near him.

Then a startling think happened.

The tree under which he stood seemed to change suddenly, and the foliage grew longer. The trunk became slimy and wet with moss. The sky darkened until he could hardly see beyond the clearing. He wiped the water from his eyes and tried not to notice that the grass was suddenly high enough to reach his knees and the clearing was entirely strange to him.

Then the air filled with a sound not entirely foreign to him. There came the high-pitched, trumpeting call of an elephant. It couldn't be coming from the elephant shed at the zoo. That was probably half a mile away. Perhaps one of them had escaped!

But no, the creature that emerged from the lush growth near the tree was a complete stranger. It had the meanest eyes Freddie Funk had ever seen.

The elephant walked slowly into the middle of the clearing. The wind went down as suddenly as it had arisen and the storm died, as though someone had turned off the supreme water tap. Freddie could see the grass shrink back into the ground and the tree return to normal. The park was the same and the sun was shining once more. Only one thing troubled him.

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The elephant was still there.

The elephant stood very still, staring at Freddie. Freddie tried to fade into the tree, gave up, and waited, determined to die like a man.

The elephant stared for a minute, then settled back on its haunches and let its trunk droop to the ground.

Freddie Funk decided to make a run for it. He edged away from the tree and took a few steps toward the lagoon. The elephant opened its eyes a little wider, stood up and took two earth-shaking steps toward him. Mr. Funk froze in his tracks. The elephant came so close that its breathing was clearly audible to Freddie Funk. In Freddie's imagination the creature was about to pounce. He wondered if he were to die by being trampled on, or if the huge creature would swallow him alive and digest him at leisure.

With the first spell of horror gradually dwindling down to icy fear, Freddie noticed something about the beast that he hadn't been in condition to see before. On its back was a square box-like thing with a canopy over it. A heavy leather strap circled the elephant's belly and held the box from falling off. Freddie thought he detected a gleam of reproach in the elephant's eye.

Was it possible that the mountain of flesh was going to spare his life?

Freddie stood still and the elephant did likewise. No one came to Freddie's rescue.

DORA was puzzled by her first contact with Chi-ca-go. Truju had been a good friend, but this strangely dressed, curly-topped creature didn't seem to understand her. She winked one eye and waved her trunk at him in a friendly gesture. The man turned in panic and started to run. Dora wasn't going to lose the first friend she had met in the new world. She juggled along behind him like a pet dog, although with slightly larger proportions. She nosed out a gentle trunk and wrapped it around Freddie's waist. A horrible gurgle escaped Funk's lips. His arms and legs flashed in the air. Dora stopped running, lifted him gently to her broad head and sat him down.

The contest was a draw. Both of them were puzzled. Freddie because he was still alive, and Dora because Freddie seemed afraid of her.

Freddie Funk looked down on the broad gray flanks and the twitching, eager trunk. It was plain enough that the animal had been trained. That she belonged either to a circus or the zoo.

He remembered something about an elephant's stearing gear. If you kicked her on the right side of her head, she went in one direction and if on the left side, the other. He didn't remember which way she was supposed to go, but it didn't make much difference. One duty was clear to him. He must get the beast back to the zoo before it ran down and killed someone. In fact he was getting quite a heady feeling now at having escaped doom so neatly. He must have a power over animals. It wasn't just anyone who could handle an elephant as easily as he could.

"Giddap," Freddie said.

Dora shook her head a little.

"Start moving," Freddie commanded. "March—get into gear—move."

Dora failed to respond. Freddie pecked her gently on the side of the head with his heel. Dora went into motion slowly. She turned toward the south end of the park. She started to amble ahead slowly, swinging from side to side as she moved. Funk grasped a handful of her ear and held on. He wondered what he had ever seen in *Dumbo* that was funny. Right now elephants were far from being attractive or funny.

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Dora had no particular goal in view. She was looking for a field, because Oscar would be in a mu-see-um field somewhere near the city. She was more anxious to see what America was like. The man on her head was a good companion. He just held onto one ear and was very little trouble to her.

THE cop at Michigan and Chicago turned around to whistle at the south-bound traffic, put a white-gloved hand over his head and started to wave. The whistle made no sound. His hand stayed aloft and his eyes bulged.

"My God! Pachyderms!"

Coming down Michigan Avenue at a sedate speed was Dora, the elephant, with a very unhappy Freddie Funk perched atop her back. Freddie, unable to get down once Dora's journey started, had climbed to the comparative safety of the howdah and was bouncing from one side of it to the other. Behind Dora, stretched out as far as the cop could see, was a double line of traffic.

The cop turned around, ignored the traffic light, and placed both hands carefully on his hips. A snarl took possession of his lips and he became a man with a purpose in life. Dora moved up to the intersection, became a little timid about all the movement about her, and stopped in the center of the street.

"Well. Well." The cop was beginning to get his wind up. "If it isn't the Rajah of Evanston. Good morning, Rajah. And where might you be headed for?"

Freddie looked down the vast curve of Dora's flanks, smiled uncertainly, but made no move toward dismounting.

"I'm sorry, Officer," he said weakly. "I—that is—I can't seem to do anything about it."

"Maybe a traveling medicine show?" the cop said with smooth syrup of cyanide dripping from his tongue. "And what are you selling, little man?"

Freddie fidgeted.

"I can't get down," he wailed. "It isn't my elephant. The darned animal put me up here. I found her in the park."

"Well now, and ain't that nice." The cop's voice changed suddenly, to a domineering roar. "Well, you can take her back to the park and drop her right where you found her. I ain't having that pachyderm parked on my corner."

This conversation had taken a few moments; meanwhile small boys, and some who weren't so small, had gathered on all four corners. Traffic was snarled for blocks in all directions, and horns were adding to the general volume of noise.

Dora was nervous. All this was new to her, and although she was determined not to become frightened, her heart fluttered heavily. The man in the blue uniform was becoming nasty and she didn't like him. Dora pushed out a swinging trunk and nudged him gently. The cop lost his balance and went flat on his back. His face turned several strange and unpleasant colors and the sounds that came from his lips told Dora that he was displeased with her attention. A bit sorry for him, she curled her trunk around his middle and put him on his feet again.

Walter O'Reilly was a God-fearing, honest member of the police force. There was nothing in the regulations about the handling of elephants at intersections. It was also plain to him that the pale-faced, curly-headed chap on top of the beast was no better help than none at all.

Action would have to be taken—and fast. O'Reilly had lost what little dignity remained. He had but one course open. It was the call of the wild, the ultimate of ultimates in the police department. Adopting a swag-

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gering pose, he howled at the top of his lungs:

"I arrest ye in the name of the law for everything in the book! Come along now, we're going to the station."

DORA remained motionless, her red eyes focused on O'Reilly. Freddie Funk started to say something, then decided it would be better unsaid. He climbed out of the howdah, took a long breath and slid down Dora's side. He hit the pavement, fell, then picked himself up.

"All right, Officer," he said. "I'm ready. Anything to get away from that—that monster."

O'Reilly had a problem. In fact, there seemed small chance of evading the problems that continued to arise with the minutes. The traffic was out of control now, so helplessly tied up that a special squad would have to come and unsnarl it. Irate citizens, themselves staying a careful distance away, were howling their lungs out for action.

"The elephant," O'Reilly said. "Get him out of the street, will you?"

He wanted to say please, but his dignity wouldn't stand for it.

Freddie grinned, but without humor.

"Couldn't we call the zoo, or something?"

O'Reilly moaned.

"It's your elephant, ain't it?"

"No!" Freddie shuddered. "It isn't. I can't help it if the thing insisted on giving me a ride."

O'Reilly was beyond anger. Inside him, a seething mass of indignation, horror and plain fear ran rampant.

"We gotta think this over." He went toward the curb and Freddie followed. It was as simple as that. Dora, seeing her friend walking away from her, followed Freddie from the street to the cool turf of the bit of park near the water tower. Automobiles started to flow forward again and O'Reilly sighed.

"Anyhow," he said, "she follows you. That oughta prove——"

"It doesn't prove anything," Freddie protested. "I don't own the elephant. I never saw it before. Now can I go?"

O'Reilly regained some of his strength.

"To the station," he said. "I'm calling the wagon right now."

DORA had some trouble following the wagon. She felt that it was trying to escape her, and Freddie Funk, her closest friend, was inside it. Dora heaved and bumped her tonnage along the street, trunk and rump swinging in unison. If Loop traffic was tied up in knots and the two cops in the wagon were more than a little disgruntled by their unwonted shadow, Dora didn't know it.

The wagon pulled up at the police station. Freddie was whipped out of sight before Dora could catch up. She stood outside the station, leaning wearily against a lamp post. The crowd switched quickly to the opposite side of the street and Dora waited for Freddie to reappear.

The desk sergeant was faced with a situation unique in police history. He stared across the desk at a hushed, appreciative audience made up of two cops and a white-faced, bedraggled Freddie Funk.

"It don't belong to no one," he announced gravely. "I called the zoo and the circus. I even called the Field Museum. That elephant has gotta be yours."

"But it isn't," Freddie protested. "I told you before, I was in the park and it just——"

The sergeant waved an impatient

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hand to cut off Freddie's protests.

"We know," he said. "You'd think there wasn't any elephant. No one knows anything about it. No one owns it."

A light dawned in his eyes.

"Hey," he said suddenly. "This ain't a gag, is it? You guys ain't kidding all the time?"

There was breathless hope in his voice.

"Aw, Sarge, quit the kidding!"

"The elephant's real enough," the other cop said. "We left it outside when we——"

CRASH!

Proof! Proof everlasting, that would brand the desk sergeant for the remainder of his career.

The front of the station bulged in suddenly, and bricks showered from a two-foot area around the door. Both doors flew into the hall, glass shattered on stone; and Dora, carrying the sill around her neck like a wreath, heaved into sight.

"My Gawd——" the sergeant shouted.

"My very words," one of the bluecoats said, a little sarcastically. "Seeing is believing, eh Sarge?"

"THIS case is without precedent," the Judge said. "We have checked every possible point to find out if an elephant has escaped. It is necessary to assume that the pachyderm belongs to you."

Freddie Funk sat alone in the small courtroom, head drooping rather pitifully, the weight of the world on his shoulders. A week had passed since Dora first walked into his life. She was waiting for him now, tied outside the court, a squad of fifteen policemen ranged around her.

"But it isn't mine," Freddie wailed for the thousandth time. "I was just standing there, minding my business."

"We know." The judge waved his hand. "However, possession, in this case, is the deciding factor. Young man, there is nothing to be gained by falsehood. Why don't you take your pet and go home?"

Freddie thought of the kitchenette apartment and Aquanis, his wife. A nice setting for an elephant!

"Home?"

The judge began to rustle papers on the bench.

"Young man, do you realize there's a war on. The zoo will not consider feeding the beast under present conditions. The museum is filled with elephant exhibits. They don't want to be troubled. You'd better find a home for the beast before it gets into further trouble. I can't promise you protection if this goes much farther."

His attitude was threatening. Freddie stood up. An elephant as a boarder. He didn't have enough ration points to feed Aquinas and himself.

Freddie left the courtroom with bowed head. What had he done to deserve such a fate? Outside, he went through the police squad, waited for Dora to lift him aboard and then held on tightly as Dora started to jog toward Michigan Boulevard. Where would he go? Where could any man, tied down for life to an elephant, go at a time like this? There was little hope of escaping his fate.

THE farmer, Ezra Wiggin, stared at Freddie Funk with good-natured disbelief.

"An elephant? And what would I do with an elephant?"

Mr. Wiggins had twenty acres and a small house fifteen miles from the the city. It had been a long trip. Dora was drinking the mud puddle dry in Mr. Wiggin's farm yard.

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"Wouldn't an elephant be good for hauling a plow, or something?" Freddie asked.

"I got a tractor."

Freddie considered that.

"It might break down," he said. "An elephant could drag the plow and the tractor both."

Wiggin guffawed.

"That don't make sense."

Freddie groaned.

"Look," he begged. "For two weeks nothing has made sense. I'll tell you what I'll do. You keep it here and feed it hay and—and stuff, and I'll pay you five dollars a week."

Mr. Wiggins did a little fast calculation.

"Nope," he shook his head. "That big galoot would eat five bucks worth of hay alone."

"Ten dollars," Freddie said, remembering his ration points.

Wiggin went into conference with himself.

"Might not be a bad idea," he agreed finally. "No monkey business, mind you. If that mountain of flesh gets into trouble just once, out it goes."

"Oh, but it won't," Freddie assured him. "I'll come out once a week; and besides, I hope to sell it pretty soon. The Field Museum is thinking about taking it."

Dora had risen from her mud wallow and walked within hearing distance of the two men. At the mention of the Field Museum her ears flapped once and lifted slightly. Her eyes brightened. At last she was getting a line on Oscar, her boy friend. Truju had told her he was in the musee-um field. Maybe they didn't say it that way here in America. The names sounded a lot alike.

She walked toward Freddie and nuzzled the tip of her trunk into his arm pit.

"See?" Freddie offered. "She's very gentle."

"Just the same," Wiggin insisted, "I'm chaining her to the barn. Can't be taking no chances."

Freddie hoped the barn was a strong one. He'd pay any amount to keep the beast away from him.

Almost feeling that the elephant could understand him, he turned to Dora.

"You're going to have a nice home with lots to eat," he pleaded. "Now, be good and stay put, will you?"

Dora's eyes twinkled.

"Don't you leave 'til we get her chained up," Wiggin ordered. "Darned if I ain't a fool even to consider——"

"Come on," Freddie interrupted hurriedly. Where's that chain?"

FREDDIE FUNK was happy. At least, his mind know peace it had not felt for weeks. The elephant was safe at Farmer Wiggin's place and Freddie, seated comfortably in his thirty-nine coupe, hummed toward home. The car hummed, that is, because Freddie himself was, as usual, whistling an unreasonable facsimile of the latest song hit.

Small worries take the place of large ones. Freddie noticed the gas tank was suffering pains from too little fuel. He spotted a station a quarter of a mile ahead, mentally checked his ration points and decided he could stand three gallons. Spinning the wheel, he drove in and got out of the coupe. An overalled attendant came out of the two-by-four building.

Freddie sought other places more necessary at the moment. When he returned, he found another car had come in for service.

The new arrivals were a tough-looking bunch. Four men, all resembling Funk's idea of Al Capone, sat patiently

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as the attendant filled their tank. Freddie, waiting to pay his bill, sauntered toward the other car.

Then it happened. The little spot of bad luck developed into a big one. One of the men poked an ugly snouted machine gun from the rear seat.

"Stick up the mitts."

Freddie hesitated, saw the attendant reach, and did likewise.

The front door opened and the driver got out. He was a tall, thick-lipped individual with wide, innocent eyes. He frisked Freddie and the station attendant. Freddie's pocket gave up four bucks, his last hold on the world of finance.

"Your dough inside?" the thick-lipped guy asked.

The attendant shook his head quickly, unable to bring forth verbal response.

Thick Lip went across the gravel and entered the station. He was busy for a minute over the cash register. He came out and approached Freddie.

"That your car?"

Freddie nodded.

Thick Lip turned calmly and filled the tires with lead. Then he re-entered his own car.

"Better not try to put in an alarm," he said. "I cut the phone wire."

Freddie, however, didn't hear this. Across the road there was a wooded area of about one acre in extent. Freddie Funk saw something among the trees that sent his heart spinning. The elephant, evidently escaped from Farmer Wiggin's place, was peeking slyly from the brush close to the road. It looked as big as a house, standing there in the shadows.

The man in the car was watching Freddie Funk. He turned, following Freddie's gaze. His mouth opened and he gulped down whatever he was going to say. One of the men in the rear seat turned and saw Dora's huge bulk.

"Elephants," he shouted. "Cripes—let's get out of here."

AFTER that, things happened too fast for Freddie. He knew that a fist came out quickly and sent him spinning into the dirt. With a loud, angry trumpet, Dora ambled swiftly out of the underbrush and across the road. It had been only a few miles across pastures from Wiggin's place. Now, with her friend Freddie in trouble, she moved in. This was Dora's call to battle.

Freddie afterwards wondered why none of them shot her. It probably had been the complete surprise of it all. Not often do gangsters shoot elephants. Perhaps they didn't know a bullet would stop her.

Dora was across the pavement and beside the car in much faster time than she had ever made before. She snorted and fumed as she ran and her eyes were red with hate.

With a howl of fear the driver, Thick Lip, dove out of the car and started to run in the opposite direction. The others tried to follow, but they were too late. Dora slipped her trunk under the running board, felt for a hold and lifted. The car tipped upon one side and rolled over. The air was filled with screams of fear and protest. Freddie, partly dazed by the blow he had received, sat up a few feet away and watched the car crumple up as it rolled.

Then the attendant had one of the machine guns, and was lining up the crooks.

"Five hundred bucks," he was saying with a sob in his voice. "Jeez, mister, your elephant is a peach. That's all the dough I got in the world."

Thick Lip was gone, but his buddies were ready for the police. Freddie, still sitting on the ground, felt Dora's trunk go around him tenderly and she

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lifted him to her head. Freddie leaned over and patted her. Dora squealed and pushed her trunk into his hand. All was well in the world of Freddie Funk and Dora the elephant.

For how long? That, Funk thought, remained to be seen.

BECAUSE Dora had captured most of the notorious Crooked Cash gang, the city council thought it ought to do something extra noble about the whole thing. Freddie knew Thick Lip, the leader of the crooked Cash outfit was still at large, and that he, Freddie, was easy to find as long as Dora was with him. It would do no good to worry. That Thick Lip would do something about losing his buddies, Freddie never doubted. He lived in constant fear that the gangster would hunt him down and murder him as soon as he possibly could.

The city council voted that Dora should be allowed the freedom of the city streets so long as Freddie kept her with him and allowed the elephant no private excursions. The city could stand the publicity, and Dora became *Fighter,* the Courageous Gangster-Hunting Pachyderm of Chicago.

The name gave her a spot in the limelight and included an appearance at Soldier Field. It also gave free rides to the Mayor's two children. Dora was on the front pages.

In spite of all this, she was unhappy. An elephant can get just so close to a man before one or the other has to do something about it. Dora's new home was in a deserted fire station outside the Loop, but the city stopped feeding her after the first pangs of public acclaim died down. The job fell on Freddie's weak pocketbook. All this, and Dora's constant company whenever he went out, troubled Freddie Funk deeply. Hence the trip to the Field Museum in the hope of a solution.

With Dora browsing around outside the Field Museum, Freddie Funk approached the office of Curator William Biggs, the man who had shown interest in Dora's hide. Biggs was a slim, dark-faced chap with a pump-handle nose and glasses to match. He accepted Freddie's hand as though it was a sacrificial object.

"Most happy, you know. Not every day a fellow brings in a real live pachyderm to sell. Unusual, quite."

"Thanks" Freddie offered. "I—I wonder if you're really interested in buying; that is, I want to get a decent price, but I *am* anxious to get rid of the animal.

"Quite." Biggs nodded quickly, his eyes opening and closing each time his head wagged. "I'm not prepared to name a price. However, to state the facts with droll humor, we'll give the old girl a safe and everlasting home."

Freddie shuddered. He knew that they would kill the elephant, then use her bones and skin to mount a life-like figure of her in the elephant hall. In spite of himself, the thought gave him a shiver.

It hardly seemed fair. . . .

"It—it wouldn't hurt much, would it?" he asked suddenly.

"It won't hurt *you* a bit," Biggs said, then laughed at his own high humor. "It might, that is, cause some inconvenience to the elephant. After all, she wouldn't be able to move around much, stuffed."

Freddie shuddered, trying to pass over the subject lightly.

"You'd be willing to pay. . . ?"

"For the time being I can't discuss—"

BANG! CRASH!

Freddie whirled around sharply; and Biggs, after collecting his wits, stared toward the outer doors with wide eyes

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and a bobbing Adam's apple.

"I say—this isn't allowed; not a live elephant . . ."

Dora didn't care what was allowed. She stood in the middle of the main hall, part of two swinging doors draped around her head, a frightened attendant hanging in her trunk.

Dora had found Oscar!

SHE was a little angry at Freddie Funk. She had been waiting outside for some time when a couple of women, passing her, mentioned they were going directly to the Field Museum. Dora's mind turned over in crazy flip-flops and she knew that the Field Museum wasn't a field at all, but a huge building.

If Oscar was here, she was going to find him.

The doors had been difficult but she managed to push through. The attendant had tried to shoo her away, so she carried him along with her. Now, her trunk high in the air, Dora saw Oscar standing at the far end of the hall, a magnificent specimen of leathery brown.

With him were several other gentlemen elephants and a couple of frowsy females.

Dora heard Freddie shout at her; but Freddie had brought her here without letting her know what was inside. She failed to consider that Freddie knew nothing of her love. Freddie was shouting louder and waving his arms.

Dora ambled quickly down the hall to Oscar's side and started to rub her thick hide against his.

People were gathered at the head of the marble stairs and in the lobby. No one semed to know what to do.

To Dora's surprise, Oscar was very cold and stiff. He paid no attention to her. She reached up tenderly and wrapped her trunk around his. Oscar remained still and disinterested. Dora made little love noises in her throat but her boy friend seemed intent on ignoring her.

Dora became angry. Perhaps the frowsy females who stood near him had turned Oscar's head. Dora triumpeted savagely and started to shuffle around the big hall. Nothing she could do would bring Oscar's mighty head down to her level.

In a sudden fit of anger, she wrapped her trunk around his, and jerked. A horrible rumble came from beneath them and Oscar, weighing no more than a third of what he used to, tipped over and crashed to the floor. Dora backed away.

Oscar was dead. There was no doubt about that. Stretched full length on the marble floor, he retained the same stiff appearance. Dora lifted her trunk to the sky and trumpeted her grief. The museum echoed like a lonely tomb. Then Dora, head down, turned and shuffled slowly toward the door. Her red eyes were overflowing with tears. She saw and heard nothing. Once outside, she moved swiftly across Grant Park toward the north.

IN A little grove of trees near the north end of Lincoln Park, Freddie Funk sat with knees drawn up under his chin. He was still for a long time, back against a tree, staring at the broken-hearted elephant opposite him.

Freddie has followed Dora to their first meeting place. Dora was sitting on her haunches, trunk hanging before her without a quiver left in it, tears streaming down her trunk.

"I—I guess you used to love that elephant at the museum?" Freddie said.

Dora nodded her head from side to side. Love Oscar? What had they done to him? She wished she had stayed at home with Truju. That she

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had never found out about Oscar.

"I'm sorry," Freddie said. "You and I get along all right. I hope you're not mad at me?"

Dora thought that over, then shook her head. Freddie wasn't to blame. He'd been a good pal all along.

"What I'd like to know," Freddie went on, "is where the heck did you come from. You aren't like any elephant I ever saw. I know darn well you understand everything I say."

Dora nodded again, and a fresh outburst of tears started.

"Aw, cut it out," Freddie Funk pleaded. "That won't help. You oughta go back where you came from and forget all this."

Dora's eyes brightened. Now that wasn't a bad idea. Truju said all she had to do was——"

Suddenly a shudder coursed through her body.

What had Truju said? What was the magic spell?

Dora had forgotten. Truju said all she had to do was——

No use. She couldn't remember a bit of it. A fresh torrent of tears started.

She was in America, Oscar was dead; and she had no way of going home again. Freddie Funk seemed to understand that she was lonely and bewildered. He stood up and put his arm around her trunk.

"Take it easy," he urged. "Everything will work out all right."

But would it? Funk was frightened. Thick Lip, the escaped leader of the Crooked Cash gang, was on the prowl. Twice, late at night, Freddie had ducked into doors just in time to avoid a strange car that hurtled past him with guns poked through the windows.

The museum was threatening to sue for the damage Dora had done and Freddie wondered what he would use for money if they really got tough. The novelty of having an elephant running around the town was beginning to wear off for the city council. Discussions were under way about the probable market for elephant steaks to help relieve the meat shortage.

Dora was beginning to get irritable.

EVERY night she insisted on revisiting the grove at Lincoln Park. There she would sit for a full hour, nodding her head back and forth eagerly, eyes suddenly bright, then fading again as she failed to revive a poor memory.

She thought of every possible magic word Truju ever used, then gave it all up as a bad job. Who the hell said elephants never forget? There couldn't be more than one or two magic words, and still she couldn't think of them.

Dora started to lose weight, Freddie lost confidence and the city council was losing patience. The peanut market in Chicago was losing most of its natural resources. Dora had to eat.

Thick Lip was out, once and for all, to get Freddie Funk. This time Thick Lip left his gang behind. He armed himself with a rod and followed the elephant and her keeper on one of their nightly trips to the park. It was close to nine in the evening.

Freddie had gone through the usual dozing spell and Dora had once more sobbed her eyes out. The problem was too deep for her.

Thick Lip was no fool. He planned to shoot Funk from behind the tree against which Freddie leaned, make a run for it and escape the elephant in the darkness. All might have gone well if the moon hadn't figured into the hand.

Freddie, arising from his post, approached Dora and started to lead her away. Thick Lip aimed the gun carefully, but the moon sent a beam of

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light rippling down the barrel of his gun. Dora caught the flash of light, saw the twisted face above it and pushed Freddie to one side roughly.

The gun cracked, and the bullet buried itself in Dora's thick hide. It didn't hurt much, but the sting and the sight of the man who had once before attacked her friend, sent Dora on a rampage.

Thick Lip saw his mistake almost at once, but it was too late.

Dora went into action. She was around the tree and after Thick Lip with one long, very ungraceful bound. Dora could cover a lot of ground when she had to.

This time her anger was a terrible thing. She played with the gangster as though he were a rag doll. Thick Lip lived only during the first bounce, but Dora kept right on playing ball with him until there wasn't enough left to throw.

She felt alive and vibrant again. This was more like it. Life had lost its excitement and now she was recapturing some of it. After a while, things were very quiet. No spectators showed up and she lost interest. Freddie had managed to get to his feet and was leaning against a tree, eyes wide with horrified interest.

Feeling that a battle cry of victory was in order, Dora turned and started pawing the ground, her trunk lifted toward the sky.

Then destiny played its part.

She lifted her right foot and brought it down sharply three times. She trumpeted loudly, just twice. Three trumpets and two foot-falls would have left her in Chicago. The ratio, however, was as Truju had outlined it. Dora had, by a strange error, hit on the magic formula.

The moon sank out of sight behind a cloud and the wind was suddenly hushed. Then from nowhere, a hot rushing storm came up. The trees bent double. Freddie Funk, holding tightly to the tree closest him, felt the bark change under his fingers. He looked upward and saw that he was holding the trunk of a giant fig tree. Grass had sprung up around his knees. He closed his eyes and started to pray.

Then the wind was gone. Freddie opened his eyes slowly. The park was the same. The moon was out again and the turf was smooth and green under his feet.

Dora and Thick Lip were both gone.

Freddie sat down limply, understanding little of what had happened. One thing he was sure of. His worries were over.

BUT were they?

Two days later, his apartment phone rang. "This is Mr. Wiggin calling," said a voice at the other end of the wire. "I still got that box thing we took off your elephant when you left her here at my farm."

"Oh." Freddie Funk wondered if he'd ever hear the last of Dora. "You mean the howdah. Couldn't you use it for firewood, or something?"

Mr. Wiggin grunted.

"I got enough wood," he said grumpily. "Besides, it's mostly padded cloth. No good to me. I'll bring it in on my next trip to town."

Freddie groaned.

"But—but I haven't the slightest use for it."

"Can't help that," Wiggin retorted. "I got no right to keep another man's property. You'll have it back in a day or two."

"But——"

The receiver clicked in Freddie's ear.

Freddie Funk put the phone down with a bang. He thought things over for a moment, then shrugged.

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"No use trying to keep a thing that size in this apartment," he told himself. "When Wiggin delivers it, I'll chop it to pieces and let the janitor burn it."

DORA was quite happy. Only one thing marred her pleasure: Truju was lecturing her again.

"You a bad elephant, Dora!" Truju regarded her gravely from his seat on the mahogany log. "First you forget how to come back, then you forget to bring the Rajah's howdah with you. The Rajah say he like to kill you."

Dora heard only about every third word. She found herself missing Freddie Funk. She wished she had brought him home to India with her.

"That howdah one good thing, Dora," Truju went on. "The Rajah say he put hundred fine rubies in lining so he have mad-money when he get too far from home. Them rubies make any man rich, Dora."

Dora's eyes brightened and the last traces of tears left them. So Freddie had his reward after all. Maybe everything was for the best. She had never been cut out for city life. She had saved Freddie from being killed, and had left him rubies to make him a rich man.

"Elephants supposed to have good memory." Truju waggled a lean finger at her. "I maybe whip you for being bad elephant."

Dora pushed her trunk into a nearby pool of water, sucked up a trunkful and gravely squirted it into Truju's face.

THE END

☆ THE HUMAN HEART ☆

THE human heart is the spring of our activity. Its efforts either reinforce or stop our own. The heart is located on the left side of the body and is easily felt beating after running, or many times, even in normal resting. In rare cases the heart is found to be located on the right side of the body. The muscle of the heart differs from all other muscles in the body, being a cross between the two other types of body muscle but having characteristics different from both.

Although we cannot stop or start the heart, we can increase or decrease its speed. One way is by increasing the number of impulses going to the heart. This takes place when we decide we are in a hurry to get somewhere or when we are nervous about something. This also takes place when we are afraid so that we can move more smoothly and easily.

The heart is also speeded up or slowed down by chemicals. One of the most important of these chemicals is adrenalin, the excretion product of the adrenal glands. Much work was done on the heart to learn this fundamental fact, but the rewards have been both fitting and numerous. When a patient's heart slows down during an operation to an exceedingly low level, this vital drug is introduced into the blood stream and has an immediate salutory effect on the patient.

The heart is not shaped like the heart on the valentine candy boxes. It is rather shaped like a plum and has great veins entering it and great blood vessels leaving it. The left side of the heart is far more muscular than the right side, for all blood sent to the body goes through this channel and much blood does flow from it.

The valve system of the heart is at once its most ingenious and weakest part. Blood must not flow backwards since this would mix blood of greater oxygen content with blood of less oxygen content. These valves are thin but mighty enough to withstand the blood pressure which is so great at these points. They are most easily attacked by germs and have no defense; therefore, they are the weakest links in the chain.

The heart, then, is a muscle, not controlled but beating by itself. Its importance is unquestioned and lack of its work means lack of life.

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A HORSE ON

By WILLIAM P. McGIVERN

For a moment he could do no more than remain on hands and knees, dazed

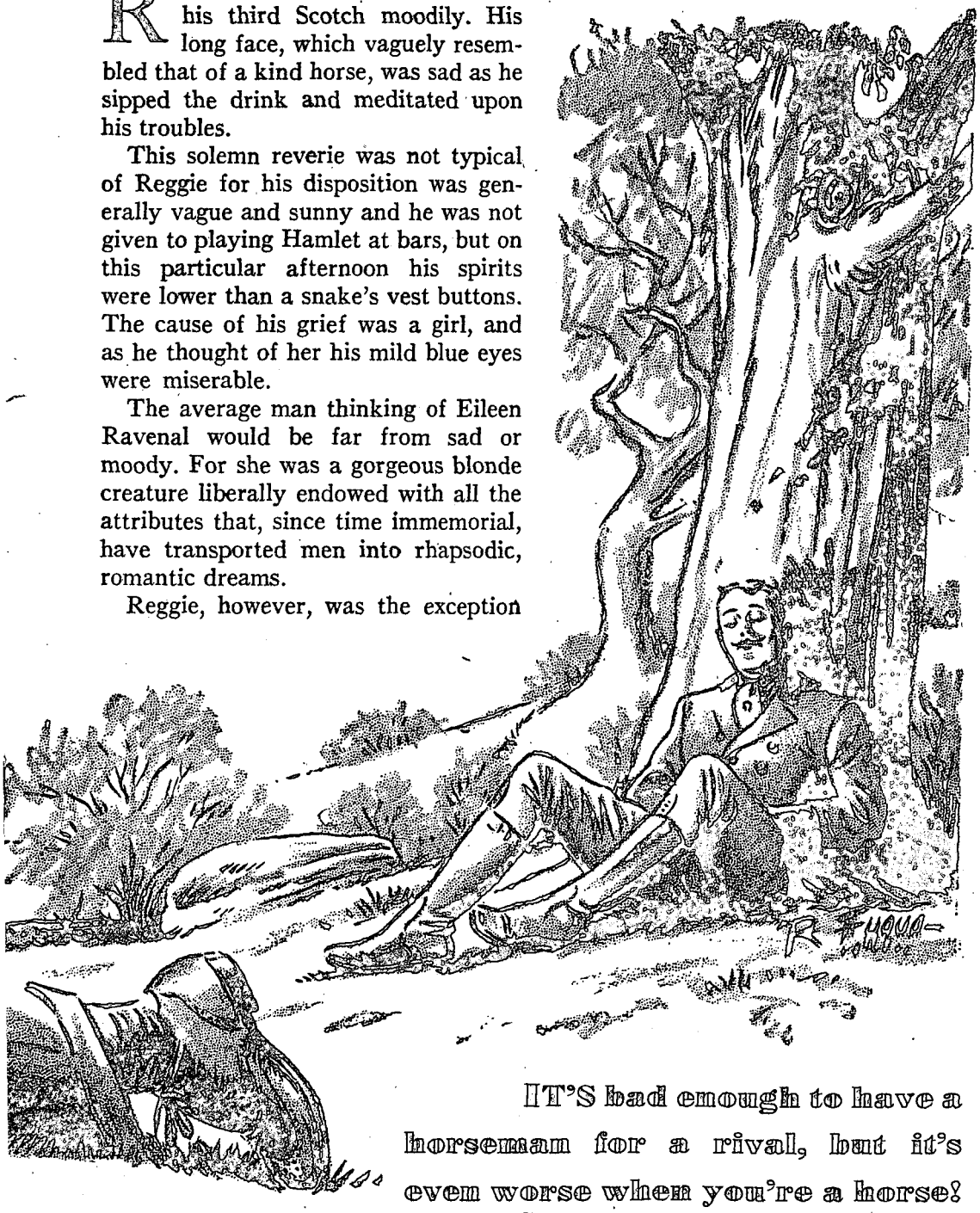
THORNDYKE

REGGIE THORNDYKE ordered his third Scotch moodily. His long face, which vaguely resembled that of a kind horse, was sad as he sipped the drink and meditated upon his troubles.

This solemn reverie was not typical of Reggie for his disposition was generally vague and sunny and he was not given to playing Hamlet at bars, but on this particular afternoon his spirits were lower than a snake's vest buttons. The cause of his grief was a girl, and as he thought of her his mild blue eyes were miserable.

The average man thinking of Eileen Ravenal would be far from sad or moody. For she was a gorgeous blonde creature liberally endowed with all the attributes that, since time immemorial, have transported men into rhapsodic, romantic dreams.

Reggie, however, was the exception



IT'S bad enough to have a horseman for a rival, but it's even worse when you're a horse!

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for the simple reason that Eileen Ravenal had resisted, with unflattering ease, his numerous attempts to change her last name to Thorndyke. And since she wanted no part of him except as an understanding friend, he was very unhappy.

He sighed heavily and ordered another drink, and as the bartender set it before him, he became aware that a small, gray-haired man had taken the stool at his side and was staring at him with fixed, intent eyes.

Reggie stood this gimlet-eyed attention for about two minutes, growing more uncomfortable all the time. Finally he turned to the little man.

"I say, old fellow," he said, "would you mind looking the other way for a while?"

The little man, who was dressed in neat dark clothes, smiled in uncertain embarrassment. His face and clothes were plain but his eyes were a deep solid blue and they seemed out of place in the mine-run quality of his face.

"I'm sorry for staring," he said, in a soft, quiet voice, "but you seemed unhappy and I thought"—his smile became apologetic—"that I might be of some assistance."

Reggie patted him on the shoulder.

"Appreciate your interest, and all that," he muttered, "but I'm beyond help. Girl doesn't love; all that rot. Sorry. Not much you could do."

The little man edged closer. There was an interested look on his small drab features.

"Sometimes things aren't quite as dark as they seem," he murmured.

Reggie looked at him with distaste. He was not in any mood for a cheery, inspirational sermon; and the little man seemed on the verge of launching into a pep-talk straight out of Dale Carnegie.

"Things are plenty dark," he said firmly. "And whether they are dark, or just *seem* dark is beside the point. Either way, the situation is no good."

The little man cleared his throat.

"I think I can help you," he said.

THERE was no mistaking the firm note of sincerity in his voice and for an instant Reggie's heart fluttered with hope. He looked at the drab little man with new interest.

"What makes you think you can help me?" he asked finally, a note of caution in his voice.

"I am a scientist," the little man said with quiet pride. "My work lies in the field of—ah—adjustment."

"Adjustment?"

The little man nodded. Precisely. I adjust people to their environment. When a man is unhappy is it usually because he is not in a proper attunement with his surroundings."

"That's very true," Reggie said thoughtfully. He finished his drink and nodded to the bartender. "And bring one for my friend, please," he said.

"Thank you," the little man said.

"Not at all. Now go on with your story. How can you help me?"

"Well," the little man said, "I'd have to know more of the circumstances involved. Supposing you tell me the facts behind this unreciprocated affection of yours."

"Gladly," Reggie said. He found himself warming to this kindly little man; and he found himself warming also to the mellow effects of the Scotch.

"I am in love with a girl named Eileen Ravenal," he began pensively. "She is the most wonderful girl in the world."

"Naturally," the little man said.

Reggie glanced at him suspiciously.

"How do you know?"

The little man smiled.

"The girl a young man loves is always the most wonderful girl in the

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world. Go on."

"Well," Reggie continued moodily, "she doesn't love me. She thinks I'm an aimless, witless, irresponsible young fool, and she doesn't go for that type. She prefers big strong men of character and so she's going to marry one." Reggie shuddered and gulped his drink. "She's going to marry an amateur sportsman, a gentleman jockey, with big muscles and piercing eyes. Serves her right," he added bitterly.

"When is this marriage to take place?" the little man asked.

"I don't know. Soon, I guess."

"Who is this man?"

"His name," said Reggie, "is Guy Mannering. His estate adjoins her fathers; and Eileen and he have known each other since they were old enough to bull-dog steers."

"Do they live near here?"

"No. Their estate is down in Virginia, in the blue grass country. Her father breeds show animals. Dogs, horses, chickens, things like that."

"And you're sure you love this girl?"

"I adore her," Reggie said fervently. "But it's no use. Their engagement is being announced at a house party this week-end." He shook his head sadly and ordered another drink. "She even had the heartless gall to invite me down for the festivities."

"Splendid," the little man said, beaming. "There is hope yet."

Reggie blinked at him.

"You're drunk," he said, hiccuping gently. "She and I are through. She said I just didn't add up to what she wanted in a husband."

THE little man slapped his hand emphatically on the bar.

"That is where I come in," he said.

"What do you mean?" Reggie said dazedly.

"Now listen to me closely," the little man said, staring fixedly at Reggie with his curious solid blue eyes. "She said you didn't add up to what she wanted, didn't she?"

"Well, yes, but——"

The little man cut him off imperiously.

"My job is to see that you do add up to what she wants," he said quietly.

"What's that?" Reggie said. Everything was getting rather fuzzy, and the little man's bewildering comments weren't helping the buzzing confusion in his head.

"Perhaps I had better explain," the little man said, with a tolerant smile. "You see, each human being is constructed to an invariable set of laws which regulate his development. Our molecular structure is determined at birth and our subsequent growth is in direct relation to that original molecular structure. Do you understand?"

"No," Reggie said flatly.

The little man chuckled good-naturedly.

"No one does," he smiled. "But anyway, I have discovered a formula which alters the original molecular arrangement of a human being and permits him to assume another arrangement which may be more to his liking. As I explained from the start, it's simply a problem of adjustment. Now, I can change your arrangement and you will become a different person. To use the very words that the girl of your choice did, you will add up to another personality, another character. Now won't that be wonderful?"

"Why, I guess so," Reggie said dubiously. "She certainly wants no part of me as I am now. Maybe if I changed completely I'd be more acceptable."

"Precisely," the little man said emphatically. He extended a hand to Reggie. "Let us shake on it."

Reggie shook hands with the little

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man and they both had another drink to cement their odd pact.

"What do we do now?" Reggie asked, curiously. He was wondering vaguely what he had let himself in for, but somehow it seemed a little late to be worrying about that.

"We will go to my laboratory," the little man said decisively.

"Fine," Reggie said. "Let's have one quick drink before we go."

"An excellent idea," the little man said.

They had an extra drink, and then another to wash it down. The house popped then for a drink, and out of common decency Reggie bought back, and then they left.

Outside, it was almost dark. Reggie hailed a cab and the little man mumbled an address to the driver. When they stopped it was before a unpretentious drugstore.

"This it?" Reggie asked.

The little man nodded. Reggie paid the driver and they got out.

"Follow me," the little man said, putting a conspiratorial finger to his lips.

HE led Reggie up a rickety flight of steps into a small, sparsely furnished room and closed the door. He switched on an overhead light and Reggie saw that a work bench had been built against one wall. It was covered with bottles, retorts, beakers and several Bunsen burners.

The little man walked unsteadily to the lab bench and picked up a small bottle. Reggie sat down on the side of the bed and blinked dazedly at him. He was conscious of being definitely drunk, but he had reached the state where that fact was no longer worrisome. While glancing about the room he noticed a bottle of whisky on a chiffonier. He stood up and crossed the room unsteadily to pour himself a drink.

The little man had been fussing about the laboratory bench and now he returned to Reggie's side. In his hand he held a glass of some substance that looked just like water.

"Drink this," he said.

Reggie looked at the mixture dubiously.

"Will it change me?" he asked.

"You'll see," the little man smiled.

Reggie took the glass and, after a moment's hesitation, drank it down. The stuff tasted just like water. He waited for an instant, but nothing happened. He burped and glanced accusingly at the little man.

"It didn't work," he muttered.

"It takes a little time," his host answered. "Don't you feel anything?"

Reggie shook his head solemnly.

"Not a thing."

"Go home and get a good night's rest," the little man said. "Tomorrow it should start to work."

"Then what?" Reggie asked.

"Then," the little man triumphantly, "take a train down to Virginia and win back your girl. You will be a changed person. Your molecular arrangement will be completely different. She will love you at sight."

"What will I be like?" Reggie asked, intrigued.

The little man looked puzzled.

"I'm not quite sure," he said thoughtfully, "but you'll be changed, and that's the important thing."

"Fine," Reggie said. "And then I go down to Virginia, is that right?"

The little man nodded.

"That's right," he said.

"I don't know how to thank you," Reggie said fervently. "You've brought hope to life again. Isn't there anything I can do for you?"

The little man smiled and shook his head.

"Just let me know how things turn

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out," he said. "That will be reward enough."

REGGIE thanked him again and left. He remembered very little about getting home to his apartment. There was an interval in the rear of a car, so he assumed he was in a cab, but his next conscious memory was entering his large, well-furnished apartment and trying to turn on the light.

But something was wrong!

He couldn't reach the switch. He stood on his toes but his hands were several inches short of the switch. And when he gave up trying he heard something scratch against the wall, and realized with a drunken start that the sound was produced by his nails sliding down the wall.

And then, to add to his bewilderment, he found that he was on all fours, trotting about the room.

This wouldn't do, he decided. He stopped and looked down and he couldn't believe his eyes. For his hands were much smaller than they should have been and surprisingly enough they were covered with hair.

They looked just like paws!

Reggie deliberated over this phenomenon for several minutes. Obviously something was wrong. He trotted to the window and looked out. A full moon was just rising in the pale blue of the night sky.

A peculiar urge came to him as he stared at the rising moon, and he sat down on his haunches and lifted his nose in the air. A plaintive bay sounded in his ears, and he peered about in sudden surprise until he realized that he was making the sound.

This thing was getting more ridiculous all the time, he decided uneasily.

With a bewildered shake of his head he decided he'd better get to bed. He trotted unsteadily across the room and hopped up on the bed. As he dropped off to sleep he decided that he'd better slow down a bit on his drinking. Things were coming to a pretty pass if a fellow started imagining he had turned into a dog.

He curled up comfortably and closed his eyes.

But something suddenly fell across his nose. He opened his eyes and saw that it was a soft, bushy tail. And it seemed to belong to him. At least it was attached to him in the customary manner.

He decided then he'd better quit drinking altogether.

CHAPTER II

THE following morning Reggie awoke and, except for a slight headache, felt exceptionally fine. He bounded out of bed, took a few deep breaths and then walked to the window to admire the strong, glorious sun that splashed on the green lawn like streaming shafts of gold.

Everything seemed wonderful, for some reason.

And then he remembered the events of the previous night, his meeting with the little scientist at the bar, the drug he had taken to alter his personality, and he suddenly realized why he felt so wonderful.

He was leaving today for Virginia to impress Eileen with his magnificent, sterling, brand-new character!

A sudden thought occurred to him and he walked to a wall mirror and peered closely at himself. He still looked the same, so he decided that his transformation had been mental and spiritual.

He shaved and dressed in a hurry. Now that he had actually decided to go to Virginia and make one last try for the affections of Eileen, he couldn't get

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started soon enough.

On the way to the train he remembered one other thing of the night before, and the recollection brought a slight frown to his face.

For he was recalling his arrival at his apartment and the peculiar sensation he'd experienced before he'd fallen asleep. He had felt like a dog! He remembered that distinctly. He had trotted about the floor, bayed at the moon, and there had been the matter of a tail . . .

He inspected himself cautiously. No, he was all right now. He smiled weakly at his reflection in the rear-vision mirror of the cab.

What an odd thing to imagine! And of course it had been his imagination. He remembered then that the little man hadn't been sure what sort of change the drug would effect on his temperament and development.

He chuckled aloud.

What a joke if the drug *had* turned him into a dog!

He laughed for a while and then the grin froze on his face and he stared dazedly at his reflection.

What a joke!

"Ha, ha," he said, "very funny."

He mopped his suddenly damp brow and put the handkerchief back in his pocket with nervous fingers.

EILEEN met him at the station. She was sitting behind the wheel of a low-slung station wagon and she waved happily at him when he got off the train.

"Throw your grips in the back," she said, as he reached the side of the car. "Gosh, it's good to see you again, Reggie," she added, as they started down the dusty road that led to Plainacres, the family estates of the Ravenals.

Reggie sat beside her, studying her smiling profile with the look of a lost fish on his face.

Eileen Ravenal was a slim blonde with eyes that seemed to be smiling at some pleasant memory. The wind blew the hair from her forehead as they drove along the winding, tree-lined road and her teeth were startlingly white in her tanned face. She wore a short-sleeved white blouse and shorts and her bare arms and legs were a light smooth brown from the sun.

She glanced sideways at Reggie as they were taking a turn and grinned.

"Seems like old times, doesn't it?" she said.

Reggie nodded in a preoccupied sort of way. His attention was focused on the road and his hands had a death grip on the door handle.

"Watch the road, will you please?" he begged. "You still drive like the poor man's Barney Oldfield."

"Oh, I know what I'm doing," Eileen smiled.

She missed a startled pedestrian by several scant inches and without pausing for breath said, "You know, Reggie, I was afraid for a while you wouldn't come down for the week-end. I thought you might have some foolish idea of not seeing me again, since I decided to marry Guy." She patted his knee affectionately. "But I should have known you wouldn't be silly about this thing. After all, there's no reason why we shouldn't be the best of friends, is there?"

Reggie was about to agree miserably, when he suddenly remembered his new personality. The old Reggie Thorndyke would have been meekly humble, but the new Reggie—well, that was another matter.

He cleared his throat decisively.

"Naturally we'll be friends," he said. "Most married couples are."

Eileen looked at him in surprise.

"What do you mean, Reggie?"

"Simply that you're going to marry me," Reggie said, knocking the ash

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carefully from his cigarette. He leaned back comfortably in the seat and ignored the incredulous expression on the girl's face. He pointed to the passing landscape. "Beautiful up here this time of the year, isn't it?"

"Have you lost your mind, Reggie?" Eileen demanded.

REGGIE regarded her with politely raised eyebrows.

"Lost my mind? I think not. It *is* beautiful up here, the Chamber of Commerce is saying so all the time." His expression became concerned. "Don't you like it?"

"Stop this double-talk," Eileen said grimly. "I'm not interested in the scenery. I want to know what you mean by saying I'm going to marry you." Her small capable hands tightened on the steering wheel. "I've never heard anything more ridiculous and presumptious in my life."

"You'll get used to it," Reggie said. "For a while you may find the idea rather new, but you'll get over that. Do you like June weddings, darling?"

"Don't call me 'darling'," Eileen snapped. "I don't know what's gotten into you, Reggie. You sound as if you're blind drunk. I invited you down for the announcement of my wedding because I thought of you as one of my friends. But if I thought you were going to cause a scene I would never have asked you."

"Oh, perish the thought," Reggie said, lightly. "There won't be any dramatics. I won't ride in on a white horse and carry you off like Lochinvar. We're both a little old for that sort of nonsense. We'll just tell your father and dear Guy that we love each other and that will be that. Your father will undoubtedly have a stroke, and Guy will try to punch me in the face, and then we'll live happily ever after. You see, the whole thing is very simple."

"Except for one trifling matter," Eileen said sweetly.

"Did I forget something?" Reggie inquired.

"Yes, you did," Eileen said, in the same sweet voice. "Of course it's just a minor oversight, and I know it won't bother you, but you did forget to ask me to marry you."

"Oh, nothing serious then," Reggie said. "You had me worried for a minute. All right, consider yourself asked. Pip! Pip! Nothing to it."

"And it gives me great pleasure to tell you I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on Earth," Eileen said heatedly. "Now does that change your plans any, Mr. Thorndyke?"

"Why, no," Reggie said blandly. "You'll say no a few times just to be feminine. But you'll marry me eventually. See if you don't."

Eileen closed her mouth grimly and stared angrily ahead. She drew several slow deep breaths, before she trusted herself to say with ominous calmness:

"I feel terrible about disappointing you, Reggie, but if you don't stop talking like a drunken fool I'll stop this car and throw you out into the road."

REGGIE laughed contentedly. In all the years he had known Eileen Ravenal she had never indicated any definite emotion toward him. Her attitude had always been friendly, casual and indifferent. And now she was angry, blazingly angry at him. He felt he was making strides. At least she was feeling something toward him, even if it was only homicidal rage.

"No you won't," he grinned. He settled back comfortably and lit a cigarette. "I hate to think of dear old Guy's disappointment," he said musingly. "After all he does love you in his crude fashion."

"Guy Mannering loves me with all

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the love a civilized man feels toward the woman of his choice," Eileen said stiffly. "He is a gentleman, a sportsman and thoroughly dependable and respectable. He is all the things you're not, Reggie, and that's why you envy and despise him," she finished bitingly.

"Guy Mannering is a pompous, stuffy fool," Reggie said calmly. "Just because he has spent the better part of his adult life on the back of a horse, is no indication of his sterling qualities. It simply proves that he is, at heart, lazy."

Eileen turned on him and the car almost ran off the road.

"A little left rudder, please," Reggie said anxiously.

The girl straightened the car with one furious snap of the wheel.

"I won't have you talking about Guy that way," she cried. "He rides because he loves horses."

Reggie shook his head emphatically and flipped his cigarette away.

"If he loved horses," he said with quiet logic, "he'd let them rest and graze instead of running the poor beasts into the ground."

Eileen started to reply but then she shook her head helplessly and there were angry tears in her eyes.

"I don't know why you're doing this," she said. "I've always thought you were a friend of mine, and I just can't understand the way you're acting."

"I'm acting this way because I love you and I don't want to see you unhappy," Reggie said. "And if you marry Guy you won't be happy."

"I'm the best judge of that," Eileen flared. "I intend to live my own life without any suggestions from you, Reginald Thorndyke."

She swung the wheel as they came to an arched driveway and turned the car into a winding lane that led to a great white house that looked like something out of *Gone With The Wind*.

"We'll be meeting father and Guy in a few minutes," Eileen said, "and I wish you would forget all of this foolishness you've been talking."

"Dear Guy and dear father," Reggie sighed. "Two rays of sunshine wasting their gleam in the storm of life." He shuddered slightly. "Does your father still get up at five in the morning and wake the neighborhood with his threats to shoot the grooms if the horses aren't ready?"

"If you don't like my father," Eileen said coldly, "you can—"

"I'm sorry," Reggie said hastily. "I really love the old bear dearly, you know that."

"You don't sound like it," Eileen said.

"I'm undemonstrative," Reggie said.

"Well, when you meet don't talk to him like you have been to me. You know he never liked you, and he might do something drastic if he ever had to think seriously of you as a son-in-law. And Guy wouldn't be too happy about it either. He might just forget his good manners and run you off the grounds if he thought you were still serious about me."

"Everybody is against the idea, but the two who really count," Reggie smiled. He patted her hand tenderly. "But we don't mind, do we, honey? As long as we understand each other, the rest of the world can go to blazes."

Eileen stopped the car in front of the house with an angry jerk.

"Will you please shut up!" she cried.

"You become more wife-like every minute, my sweet," Reggie beamed.

CHAPTER III

REGGIE followed Eileen into a vast cool room that was lined with

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books and furnished with heavy rugged furniture. There was an immense fireplace at one end of the room and the opposite wall was covered with a life-size print of a thoroughbred gelding.

Everything in the room was of huge dimensions and the gray-haired man who sat before the fireplace was no exception. His shoulders were about three feet wide and his great snowy head was like something carved on the side of a mountain.

He turned as his daughter entered the room and then he climbed slowly to his feet as he saw Reggie.

"Hello, my dear," he said to Eileen, as she stood on tip-toes to kiss his cheek. He patted her shoulder with a hand that was like a quarter of beef. His eyes met Reggie's over her head.

"Oh," he said. "It's you, is it?"

He didn't exactly frown, but on the other hand his expression was far from that of the hearty, welcoming host. The corners of his mouth turned down and his gray eyes were chilly in the ruddy tan of his face.

"Yes," Reggie said, shifting from one foot to the other, "it's me, all right."

"Hmmmmph," Colonel Ravenal said. He turned to his daughter. "Guy called," he said, in his heavy rumbling voice. "Said he'd be right over."

"Well, that's nice," Eileen said, and Reggie noticed with pleasure that there was a cool edge to her voice. "Did he bother to explain why he broke our date last night?"

"Yes, he did," Colonel Ravenal said. "One of his mares was foaling and he couldn't get away."

Reggie grinned at Eileen.

"It's new, anyway," he said. "Sitting up all night with a sick horse, instead of a sick friend. I didn't think Guy had that much imagination."

The colonel glanced suspiciously from his daughter to Reggie.

"And what was the meaning of that remark, may I inquire?" he asked.

Reggie was saved the problem of replying by the arrival of a very blond, deep-chested young man in riding clothes, who strode into the room, exuding hearty good health from every pore.

"Eileen, my dear," he exclaimed, slapping her cheerfully on the back. "I told your father why I couldn't make our date last night. But the stables has another fine colt and I guess that's worth it. Right!"

"Of course," Eileen said. She moved her shoulders experimentally and winced. "You remember Reggie, don't you, Guy?"

Guy Mannering swung about and extended his hand to Reggie with a wide, many-toothed grin.

"But of course!" he cried. "How are you, old sock?"

He raised one hand but Reggie backed out of reach.

"Fine, thanks," he said. He didn't intend to be hospitalized by any effusive back-slapping.

"I suppose you're down for the big occasion," Guy said, rocking back and forth on his heels.

"Yes, that's the general idea," Reggie said. "When is the announcement coming off?"

"Sunday night," the gentleman sportsman beamed. "We're having a dinner after the big race." He turned eagerly to the colonel. "And how's Blue Star behaving?"

Colonel Ravenal's craggy face lighted reverently.

"Magnificent," he breathed.

"Fine!" Guy cried. He swung about and slapped Eileen resoundingly on the back. "Hear that, dear? Blue Star is in magnificent shape."

"I just heard father say so," Eileen

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said drily, readjusting her shoulder.

THE young sportsman swung back to Reggie with an athletic bound. He moved as if he were on steel springs. Reggie found it exhausting to watch him.

"I suppose you've heard about the big race? I'm riding the colonel's Blue Star in the twenty-five thousand dollar Regalia meet Sunday afternoon." He beamed expansively and hooked his thumbs in his leather vest. "Sunday night should be quite an occasion," he said, grinning complacently. "It isn't every man who celebrates two triumphs in one night."

"You're pretty sure of winning, then?" Reggie said.

"A horse race is always an uncertain affair," the gentleman jockey said with a solemn frown, "but I think this one will go to Blue Star without a doubt."

Reggie caught Eileen's eye and said, "Oh, I wasn't talking about the horse race."

He smiled politely at the expression of doubt that spread over the young man's face.

"But I don't think I get you," he said, looked puzzledly at Eileen, "you mean—"

"Let's all have a drink," Eileen said quickly. She hooked her arm through her fiance's and glared icily at Reggie. "Some of us need something else to do with our mouths," she said meaningly.

"Splendid idea," the young sportsman said. "Shall I fix them, darling?"

"If you would, please," Eileen smiled gratefully at him.

"Right!"

He left the room with long strong strides, and when he returned the conversation had drifted to other channels.

"I was just telling young Thorndyke that he'd better get a good night's rest," Colonel Ravenal said, as he helped himself to a drink. He grinned wickedly at Reggie. "We still ride every morning at five," he said. "And I'll instruct the grooms to select a nice lively horse for you."

Reggie shuddered slightly. He knew what the colonel meant by a "lively" horse. Undoubtedly a four-legged son of Satan that no one had succeeded in breaking. He grinned weakly.

"Great sport," he muttered.

"Reggie knows quite a lot about horses," Eileen said sweetly. "He talked about horses all the way in from the station. And he doesn't think good riding is very difficult. He thinks the ability to ride a horse well is greatly overrated." She smiled maliciously at Reggie. "Don't you, Reginald?"

COLONEL RAVENAL put his glass down firmly.

"So you think it doesn't take anythink to handle a horse, eh?" he barked.

"Well, I didn't exactly say that," Reggie began, "but——" He stopped in mid-sentence as he suddenly realized that he was deserting his new character. He squared his shoulders.

"Riding a horse is like riding a rocking chair," he said emphatically, "and just about as difficult. Any man who has the advantage of a brain should be ashamed to admit that a poor, unreasoning horse presents a problem in mastery."

"Is that so?" Mannering said angrily. "Well we'll see how well you do tomorrow morning."

Reggie stared at him with an amused smile.

"Yes, you'll see," he said.

"I have never met a horse I coudn't handle," Mannering said, "but only because I have ridden all my life and have devoted all my time to the study of horsemanship. It isn't something a man earns overnight, it takes years of work

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and practise. I think you'll appreciate that fact after tomorrow morning. I didn't become the foremost amateur jockey in the State without learning a few things about horses and men. And I'll wager that after you ride tomorrow you'll admit that the time I've spent learning to ride hasn't been wasted."

Colonel Ravenal turned away and there was a reflective smile on his face.

"Yes," he said, "I think Reggie may learn quite a bit tomorrow morning."

CHAPTER IV

THERE were only a few faint streaks of dawn on the eastern horizon when Reggie entered the vast stables of the colonel the following morning. He hadn't gotten much sleep, and when the butler called him, he had been staring wide-eyed at the ceiling, wondering just what was going to happen to him when he climbed aboard his horse for the morning's ride.

Nothing pleasant, he felt sure. He had ridden only a few times in his life, and he always thought it was a silly way to spend one's time. And he had always been careful in his selection of horses. He liked sway-backed, lumbering creatures that looked nostalgically at passing milk wagons and clumped along in a gentle rocking motion at about two miles an hour. That was *his* idea of riding. If the rest of the world wanted to risk their necks on snorting, wild-eyed bundles of TNT that was *their* business.

He prowled moodily about the stables, with his coat pulled about his neck against the sharp morning air. He was hungry and sleepy and cold. And the realization that he would be subjected to an entire morning of Guy Mannering's offensive vitality was almost nauseating.

Two grooms were standing in front of a stall watching a great black stallion that was rearing and kicking on the inside. Reggie sidled up beside them and watched the mighty efforts of the horse as it sought to kick down a side of the stable.

One of the grooms nodded cheerfully to him.

"Morning, sir. Tiger's got his wind up a bit. But he'll quiet down after a few miles at a stiff run. Just has to have some of the ginger worked out of him."

"I see," Reggie said weakly. "Tiger, eh? Good name for him, I'd say."

The groom chuckled. "That's what everyone says. He's got a mean streak in him, all right. Almost bit a groom's arm off last month. Kicked another last week and just about killed the poor fellow. But the colonel likes 'im in spite."

"He would," Reggie thought moodily. He watched the red, rolling eyes of the horse for a moment and an involuntary shudder tickled his spine. "I suppose the colonel rides this creature?" he asked.

"Not on your life," the groom said. "He wouldn't dare. Tiger'd be dangerous for the colonel, even though he *is* a great horseman. It needs a young man to handle Tiger."

"Oh," Reggie said, "I suppose Mr. Mannering rides him then."

"Nope, we're gettin' him ready for the colonel's guest, a young fellow from out of town. Haven't seen this feller but he must be quite a rider to take on Tiger."

Reggie felt his stomach grow cold. This was the horse the colonel had selected for him! This snorting, red-eyed killer! There could be no doubt of that.

"Where you going, young feller?" the groom asked.

"Out," Reggie said, hurrying toward the rear door of the stable.

He cursed himself for a fool for hav-

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ing gotten himself into this spot. If he hadn't started bragging yesterday he wouldn't be in this mess. And if he backed out, the colonel and Mannering would never stop laughing at him.

His jaw set grimly. He would just have to steel himself to that laughter, for nothing in this world would convince him to risk his neck on Tiger. The very idea was unnerving.

LEAVING the stable, he hadn't any idea where he could go and hide until the rest of the party got started. He felt strangely sick and nervous and he thought longingly of the warm bed he had deserted. But if he went back to the house he knew they would find him and insist that he ride. So he kept walking until he found a comfortable looking haystack about a hundred yards from the stable. It looked like just what he wanted.

He stretched out gratefully and closed his eyes, but almost immediately he felt a sudden strange convulsion inside him, and a blinding attack of dizziness started his head spinning wildly. The spell lasted for several moments and when it subsided he was weak and trembling.

He put his hands to his forehead and when he did he received an unnerving shock. For instead of the palms of his hands meeting his brow he felt two hard round objects pressing against his forehead. He opened his eyes in amazement and saw two huge hooves directly before his eyes.

"Well I'll be damned!" he cried.

These words formed in his mind, his tongue moved accordingly, but no sound passed his lips. The only thing he heard was something that sounded like the surprised neigh of a horse.

He moved his arms and the two hooves moved away from his forehead, and then he saw that they were attached to his wrists, and that his wrists were covered with smooth brown hair.

He closed his eyes for an instant and prayed that his sanity wouldn't desert him at this critical moment. With something of a seventh son's intuition he knew what happened. His thoughts flitted wildly back to the little man he'd met at the bar, the potion he had drunk to change his character and the peculiar memory he'd had of acting like a dog immediately after drinking that potion.

There was no doubt in his mind what had occurred. Reggie was too smart to doubt the evidence of his senses. He opened his eyes slowly and stared down at his body.

Yes, it had happened.

He was a horse!

CHAPTER V

REGGIE scrambled to his feet and tossed his long mane frantically. What was he going to do? Obviously, the potion the little man had given him had in some weird way back-fired, and instead of changing him into another human personality, it had changed him into a horse.

That was obvious. He was a horse. A well-formed, good-looking, white-stockinged brown horse, but still a horse. And what in hell was he supposed to do?

He recalled with a fleeting feeling of relief that the transition to a dog hadn't apparently been permanent. He had, overnight, changed back to his human self. But it might take longer to change back from a horse. A horse was bigger and the transition stood logically to be a bigger job. It might take weeks.

He shuddered and neighed despairingly. How was he going to win back Eileen in this form? He was standing irresolutely by the haystack when one

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of the grooms appeared at the door of the stable.

"Well I'll be danged," the groom said, staring at Reggie unbelievingly, "how'd you get out of your stall?"

Reggie was at a loss to explain the situation. Even if he had been able to talk he would have a hard job convincing the groom that he was actually one of the house guests and not part of the colonel's live stock.

The groom came to his side and slipped a leather tether over his head.

Reggie shook his head in annoyance, but it did no good.

"Come along, boy," the groom said, patting him on the shoulder. "I don't know where you come from, but you don't belong out here."

He led Reggie into the stable and called several of the other grooms.

"Look here what I found, boys," he said. "He ain't one of ours, is he?"

The grooms looked him over critically.

"Maybe he's one of the new bunch the colonel just bought," one of the group volunteered.

"Maybe," the groom said. "Looks like a pretty good animal, don't he?"

Reggie tossed his head modestly. He looked around and saw that his coat was a shining brown, and that his legs were slim and well-muscled. Somehow the knowledge that he had changed into a sleek-looking thoroughbred made him feel a little better.

THE grooms were still standing about Reggie when the riding party arrived. Eileen, Reggie noted approvingly, looked lovely and slim in casual riding clothes, and Mannering like a personification of the Great Outdoor Man. His cheeks were ruddy and he pounded himself on the chest with hearty cheer as he breathed deeply of the keen morning air.

"Wonderful, isn't it?" he said happily. He turned and slapped Eileen on the shoulder. "When we're married, we'll ride every morning. And we won't wait this late to get started. We'll hit the trail when it's still dark. That's the real sport."

"Sounds like a lot of fun," Eileen said dryly. "What'll we do in the afternoon? Lift weights?"

Mannering laughed loudly and slapped her on the back.

"Always there with a joke," he said. "That's what I like about you, Eileen. After we're married I think I'll call you my little clown."

Eileen shuddered visibly.

"Don't strain yourself being tender," she muttered.

The colonel arrived then and the groom called him to Reggie's side.

"Found this boy out in the yard," he explained. "Don't know whether he's one of ours or not."

The colonel looked at Reggie with critical eyes.

"No," he said, "he doesn't belong here. Probably from one of the neighboring estates. Mighty fine piece of horseflesh, isn't he?"

Eileen and Mannering sauntered over to Reggie's side.

"He looks sweet," Eileen said. She patted his neck affectionately.

Reggie whinnied happily.

Mannering frowned and shook his head.

"He's got a mean look in his eye," he said. "That's a horse I wouldn't trust."

Reggie's ears pricked up angrily. What the hell did Mannering mean? A horse he wouldn't trust? He glared indignantly at the young sportsman. Did he think he looked like Abraham Lincoln as a young man?

Eileen said, "I think you're wrong, Guy."

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"My dear," Mannering said, smiling indulgently, "you'll learn when we're married that I am never wrong about horses. And by the way, where is your friend Thorndyke this morning?"

"I don't know," Eileen said. "He left his room earlier this morning."

Mannering smiled. "Remember, he was going to give us a riding lesson this morning. He probably lost his nerve and is hiding somewhere until we leave. I knew the minute I set eyes on him he was no horseman."

"There are things in life other than riding horses," Eileen said shortly.

"Well, naturally," Mannering said, "but nothing quite so important." He glanced at Reggie critically. "Now this animal is obviously a third-rate horse. Notice the closely set eyes? That means temper."

HE TURNED his back to Reggie as he spoke, and the temptation was too much for Reggie. He lowered his head and butted Mannering squarely in the back. The young sportsman let out a startled squawk as he sprawled to the ground.

"You see," he cried, as he struggled to his feet. "Temper!"

Eileen was giggling helplessly, and as Mannering stared at her with outraged eyes, she broke into another spasm of laughter.

"What," said Mannering stiffly, "is so funny about a man being knocked down by a bad-tempered horse?"

Eileen stopped laughing with an obvious effort, but her cheeks were still crimson and there were impish lights in her eyes.

"You just looked so—so surprised, that's all," she said.

"I see," Mannering said coldly. It was obvious he didn't relish being the object of anyone's ridicule. He brushed his clothes in a sulky silence and then turned to Reggie. "I think this horse needs a bit of discipline," he said. He snapped his finger at a groom. "Boy, saddle this horse for me."

"Yes, sir," the groom said.

In a few minutes Reggie was led out of the stable, equipped with bridle and saddle. Mannering mounted him and gave the bridle a brisk sawing jerk across his mouth.

It hurt very definitely. Reggie whinnied heatedly and reared on his hind legs. He heard Mannering laugh nastily and then the crop landed squarely between his eyes with stinging force. He dropped back to all fours and shook his head angrily. This was hardly a sporting proposition, and he decided the only sensible course to follow was one of meek obedience.

Mannering's heels stabbed sharply into his flanks and he started forward at a trot. Mannering turned and waved at the colonel and Eileen.

"Don't try and keep up with me," he called. "I'm going to be riding pretty hard."

"Don't work that horse too much," Eileen said.

Mannering smiled. "Leave that to me, my dear."

He brought the crop down smartly on Reggie's left flank, and lifted himself in the stirrups.

"Get movin'," he snapped tersely into Reggie's ear. "Get up!"

He accompanied the order with another flick of the crop, and Reggie needed no more encouragement. He started down the bridle path at a dead run and a few minutes later they were a couple of miles from the stables. But Mannering showed no indication of slackening the murderous pace.

His crop fell repeatedly on Reggie's side, and his voice was a constant harsh whip about his ears.

"How do you like this?" he snapped.

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"Run, you mean-tempered brute! You won't feel so frisky when you get back to the stable, I'll promise you."

REGGIE ran until his sides were heaving and his mouth was flecked with foam, but it was many miles before Mannering finally reined him to a halt.

"That'll take some of the ginger out of you," Mannering said with satisfaction. "I'll give you a few minutes to get your breath back before we return. And if you think you worked coming out, wait'll you start back. I'm going to run your legs right into your belly."

He climbed off and tethered Reggie to a tree. They were in a quiet cluster of trees through which ran a small brook. Mannering walked down to the creek, drank, and then stretched out and closed his eyes.

Reggie watched him disconsolately. The big baboon! He'd like to show him a thing or two. But there wasn't anyway he could. As long as he remained a horse he was completely helpless. He thought of the ride back to the stables with a stab of horror. A horse was supposed to be man's friend, he thought bitterly, but if there were many sportsmen of Mannering's ilk about, diplomatic relations would have been broken off long ago.

While he was standing in the shade getting his breath back, he suddenly felt the same dizzy sensation that he'd experienced when he had changed into a horse. There was a blinding stab of nausea and he thought he was going to faint. For a moment he leaned against the tree, breathing slowly and waiting for the attack to pass.

Finally his head seemed clearer and he opened his eyes. There was a cumbersome, uncomfortable object on his back and when he looked around he saw it was the saddle.

And it was uncomfortable because he was no longer a horse!

He stared at his familiar body with relieved eyes. The transformation had apparently taken only a second and once again he was back in his former shape.

He took the bit and bridle from his mouth and unbuckled the saddle from his body and let it fall to the ground. He glanced down at the creek and saw that Mannering was apparently asleep. For a moment or so he debated his course of action. Then he smiled cheerfully and tip-toed out of the grove of trees and walked rapidly until he reached a road that led back to the Ravenal home. After about a half hour's wait he managed to flag a ride with a milk truck going in that direction. He rode beside the driver with a pleased smile on his face.

He was thinking of the explanations Mannering, the peerless horseman, would have to make, when he returned to the stable without his horse. . . .

WHEN Reggie reached the colonel's estate, he went directly to his room and shaved, showered and changed. Then he went to look for Eileen. He found her in the stable with the colonel. They had just returned from their ride.

"Reggie!" she exclaimed. "What happened to you? We looked all over for you this morning. We had a wonderful ride. It's a pity you weren't with us."

"I was, in spirit," Reggie smiled. He looked questioningly from Eileen to the colonel. "And where is our young Centaur friend?" he asked.

"Mannering's still out," the colonel said gruffly. "Should be back soon though."

"Guy's riding a strange horse," Eileen said.

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"Well maybe he's had a little trouble," Reggie suggested blandly.

The colonel snorted.

"Mannering can ride anything on four legs," he said testily.

"Still," Reggie said, "with a strange horse he might not do so well."

"Guy is all right," Eileen said. "He said he was going to give that poor horse a work-out and he obviously meant what he said."

"Shall we go in to breakfast?" the colonel said. "Mannering will be along shortly."

"But I'm worried," Reggie said. "I keep thinking that he might have fallen off, or something."

The colonel paused and looked at him disgustedly.

"Young man," he said, "riders of Mannering's caliber do not 'fall off' horses."

"Maybe he was thrown," Reggie said.

"And neither are they thrown!" the colonel said explosively.

"Well, I was just wondering," Reggie murmured.

The colonel stamped out of the stables and Eileen looked suspiciously at Reggie.

"You're looking mighty pleased about something," she said. "What is it?"

Reggie smiled innocently.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he said. "Shall we go in to breakfast? He may not be along for some time."

"All right," Eileen said.

"You're not going to like being a horse widow," Reggie said as they started for the house. "Golf widows, fishing widows and so forth are all right. But coming second to a horse isn't very flattering."

"I don't know what you mean," Eileen said coldly.

"Yes you do," Reggie said. "And, by the way, have you thought any more about our marriage?"

"Frankly, I haven't," Eileen said. "After my first annoyance I forgot the entire matter."

"Still determined to marry Tarzan on horseback?" Reggie inquired.

"Certainly," Eileen said. "I admire him more than ever since you've tried to run him down. *He* was out this morning breaking a dangerous horse and working with all his strength. And what were you doing?"

Reggie sighed as he thought of his morning's ride.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you," he said. "Anyway, your hero should be back by now. My guess is the horse proved too much for him."

Eileen smiled.

"If you knew how ridiculous you sound you wouldn't make such silly comments," she said.

THEY entered the house and found a variety of hot and cold breakfast dishes spread on a buffet in the dining room. The colonel was eating when they arrived.

"No sign of Mannering yet?" he asked around a mouthful of scrambled egg.

Eileen shook her head. Reggie helped himself to a plateful of food, and as he was taking the first bite, the door opened and Guy Mannering limped into the room. He looked wilted and peevish. Under one arm he carried a loose bridle.

"Why, Guy," Eileen said, "you look worn out! Did you have a nice ride?"

"No," Mannering said peevishly. He sat down wearily and stared at his dust-caked boots. "I just walked in from the Grove," he said bleakly.

"What happened?" Eileen cried.

"Probably carried the horse back,"

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Reggie observed. "True sport and all that. Turnabout. Ride the horse out; carry him back. Be all the rage next year."

"Will you shut up, you blithering ass!" Mannering cried.

"Guy!" Eileen said, shocked. "That's hardly a way to speak to my guest."

Mannering put his head in his hands.

"Nothing like this has ever happened to me before," he said hollowly.

"You mean you were thrown?" the colonel said incredulously.

Mannering shook his head miserably.

"I lost the horse," he said. "When I got to the Grove I tethered the horse and stretched out myself for a nap. When I awoke the horse was gone, but the saddle and bridle were still there. I don't know what to make of it."

"Seems rather careless of you," Reggie said, shaking his head thoughtfully. "A man who loses a horse, well," he shrugged, "there's not much you can say in his defense."

"Oh Reggie, do be quiet," Eileen said.

The colonel was shaking his head worriedly.

"Don't know what to make of it," he rumbled. "This doesn't sound like you, Mannering."

"Maybe," Reggie said, "the horse didn't like the prospects of a hard ride back to the stable and just took French leave. The thought of having its legs ridden into its belly might not have appealed to it."

Mannering raised his head slowly and stared at Reggie with thoughtful eyes.

"I did say that to the horse," he murmured, almost to himself. "Those were the very words I used. But," he added suspiciously, "how did you know that?"

The colonel and Eileen both looked from Mannering to Reggie and their expressions were puzzled.

"Yes," Eileen said, "how could you possibly know what Guy said to his horse?"

Reggie smiled nervously.

"A little colt told me," he said.

He looked at his watch and stood up suddenly.

"Sorry I have to run like this," he said, "but I just remembered a letter I have to write. See you later."

With a polite bow he hurried out of the room.

REGGIE spent the rest of the day recuperating from his hard morning's ride. His muscles ached in a dozen places where he hadn't even suspected muscles existed; but by dinner time he felt a little better. A fresh shave and shower gave him a deceptively brisk appearance as he limped into the drawing room about seven in the evening.

Eileen met him in the doorway.

"The dead have risen," she said, as she saw him. "I guess you're the last isolationist left in the country, Reggie. We were afraid you were going to stay in your room 'til Monday morning."

Reggie managed a smile despite his aching back.

"Nice of you to miss me," he said. "Do you need more proof that you really love me?"

"Oh, stop talking nonsense," Eileen said. "I thought we'd settled that once and for all."

Reggie bowed solemnly. "From henceforth on, my lips are sealed."

"Well, that's better," Eileen said. "The very idea of my loving you is preposterous."

Reggie held up a hand firmly. "We shall say no more about it."

Eileen looked at him for a moment with a strange look in her eye. There was a line about her mouth that could

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have been impatience or disappointment. "Your attitude was perfectly silly," she said.

"Would you like a cigarette?" Reggie inquired politely.

Eileen shook her head in irritation.

"No," she said shortly. "I don't know what ever gave you the notion I might be in love with you."

Reggie ignored the remark and looked about the room.

"Where's your father?" he asked. "Isn't the old boy going to dine with us?"

"Oh, stop it!" Eileen said angrily.

"Stop what?" Reggie inquired.

"Stop being so casual and disinterested," Eileen cried. "What makes you think you can make violent love to a girl one instant and act like an Eskimo the next?" She turned away from him with an angry snap of her skirts. "You came down here and deliberately made love to me and—and you upset me and made me unsure of myself. Now you're acting like a frozen fish!"

Reggie's growing, but concealed delight, at her words was shattered by this last remark. Now he was almost sure she loved him and his indifferent attitude had made her realize that fact. But how could he ask anyone to marry him while he was going through the process of turning into various sorts of animals? It just wouldn't do. Her remark about fish brought this home to him with stabbing force. He realized that his dreams of marrying Eileen were forever beyond realization.

He forced himself to yawn boredly.

"We were speaking about your father, remember?" he asked casually.

His studied indifference brought an angry flash to her eyes.

"He's in the library," she snapped. "And I won't keep you away from him any longer you—you jellyfish! He's in there talking to that little friend of yours."

"Friend of mine?" Reggie said blankly. "What are you talking about?"

"Surely you recall asking this man to come and see you here," Eileen said impatiently. "He arrived about a half hour ago and has been talking to father ever since. They're discussing something about growth and development, I don't know exactly. Is this friend of yours a breeder?"

REGGIE'S heart was suddenly beginning to hammer with hope.

"Did you see this little man?" he asked excitedly.

Eileen looked at him oddly. "Why, of course I did," she said. "Why?"

"What did he look like?" Reggie demanded.

Eileen shrugged her shoulders.

"Not much like anything in particular," she said. "He's small, very ordinary looking, but I did notice one very odd thing. He has very interesting eyes. They seem almost solid blue. But other than that he's completely average."

Reggie was burning up with excitement. He realized from Eileen's description that the man talking to her father was the identical little man who had given him the potion that had accounted for his peculiar changes.

But what was he doing here? And how had he known Reggie would be here?

Those questions, though, weren't really important. All that counted was whether the little man had brought with him some antidote for the potion he had given Reggie. If he had, all his problems were solved.

He grabbed Eileen by the shoulders and planted a solid kiss on her mouth.

"Darling, you're wonderful," he cried.

Eileen pulled away, breathless with

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astonishment.

"Are you raving mad?" she gasped. "What's happened to you?"

"I don't know yet, but keep your fingers crossed," Reggie said.

He blew her a kiss and dashed out of the room, down the hall in the direction of the library.

The colonel was standing before the fireplace when Reggie entered the room, and Reggie saw at a glance that Eileen's father was talking to a little man seated in one of the heavy leather chairs.

And he was the little, blue-eyed man who had given Reggie the potion that had so disastrously upset his life.

The little man stood up and smiled as Reggie barged into the room.

"How do you do, my dear boy," he said cordially. "Has everything been going well?"

"No," Reggie said emphatically. He ignored the hand the little man extended. "I want to talk to you, right away, alone."

"Why, certainly," the little man said worriedly.

"Now, you're not going to rush off like this," the colonel said in his rumbling voice. He turned to Reggie and patted him on the shoulder. "Your friend Parker and I were having a very interesting chat on breeding methods. I'm glad you asked him down." He laughed boomingly. "He's the only man I ever met who knows half as much about the subject as I do. He's going to stay to dinner."

"That's fine," Reggie said. So the little fellow's name was Parker. "But Mister Parker and I have a few things to discuss," he added.

"That can wait," the colonel said, in his firmest I-will-brook-no-argument voice. "You know how the servants are if they're kept waiting."

The butler appeared at the door almost as if he were acting on cue and announced that dinner was served.

Reggie sighed. Well, it would have to wait. He caught Parker's eye meaningly.

"Right after dinner," he said.

"Certainly," Parker said. He looked worried. "I certainly want to hear what you have to report."

"Let's go in to dinner," the colonel said. . . .

DINNER was served in a vast, baronial room, paneled in solid mahogany and adorned with two heavy sideboards that contained hundreds of pieces of cut-glass and china. There was a racing print at each end of the room and the French windows opened on the garden. A cool breeze blew the soft perfume of flowers through the air.

Eileen and Mannering were already in the room when they arrived.

When they were seated at the long, heavily-laden table, the colonel picked up a goblet of water and examined it appreciatively.

"Can't wait to taste this pure water of yours, Parker," he said. "I'm sick of this spring water we get in this region. Too much iron in it for my taste." He lifted the glass to the little man. "It was an extremely thoughtful gesture for you to bring this down. I can't thank you enough."

Reggie listened to the colonel's words with bulging eyes. He stared at Parker who was regarding the colonel with a pleased little smile on his face.

"Wait a minute!" he cried, half-rising from his chair. "Did Parker bring water down here with him?"

Parker stirred uneasily, but the colonel looked at Reggie with a sudden frown.

"Yes, he did," he said.

"You see," Parker said timidly, not meeting Reggie's eyes, "I thought you folks might enjoy a gallon or so of fresh

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water, so I brought some along, just as a little gift. I hope you'll like it."

"I think that was very thoughtful of you," Eileen said. She glanced at Reggie with slightly raised brows. "You can sit down now, Reggie," she said.

"But wait a minute," Reggie said. He was staring hard at Parker and a horrible suspicion was racing through his mind. "What kind of water is it, Parker," he demanded.

"It's the same kind I gave you," Parker said. "You remember it, don't you? It does wonders for a person."

"I'm sure it will," the colonel smiled. He raised the glass to his lips.

"Wait!" Reggie's voice was practically a screech.

"What in the name of thunder is wrong with you?" the colonel shouted, his voice hoarse with annoyance.

"You can't drink that water," Reggie said frantically.

"I'll drink anything I damn please," the colonel yelled. He slammed a fist down on the table that rattled the plates sixteen feet away. "I won't be dictated to in my own home by a flighty nit-wit who acts like a refugee from a straight-jacket ninety per cent of the time. If you don't want to drink this water for some damn foolish reason, that's your business. But I'll do as I see fit."

Reggie felt sure the water in the colonel's goblet was more of the potion the little man had administered to him two days before. And he was sure if the colonel drank it, the results would be disastrous.

THE colonel was raising the goblet to his lips for the second time when Reggie sprang from his chair and dashed the glass to the floor. Most of the water splashed down the colonel's front, and he shoved himself away from the table and leaped to his feet, sputtering with rage.

"Young man!" he shouted. "Get out of my sight before I take a bull whip to your hind-quarters."

"Reggie!" Eileen exclaimed. "What *is* the matter with you?"

"Don't you drink that water, either," Reggie cried. He grabbed her glass from the table and emptied it on the floor. His face was flushed and wild. He knew that he was ruining himself forever with the Ravenals but he couldn't stand by and let them drink Parker's devilish potion.

"Get out of here!" Colonel Ravenal bellowed, pointing dramatically to the door.

"I'm going," Reggie said, "but I'm taking Parker with me."

He jerked the little man to his feet and practically dragged him from the room.

"What's the matter?" the little man asked anxiously, as Reggie hustled him up the stairs and into his room.

"What *isn't* the matter," Reggie said disgustedly, as he slammed and locked the door. He shoved the little man into a chair and glared at him belligerently.

"Why did you follow me down here?" he demanded. "And what was the idea of trying to slip some of your infernal potion to this family?"

"Infernal?" the little man said indignantly. "You can't say that about my discovery. Look what it's done to you! You're certainly a new person."

"Yes," Reggie said bitterly. "I certainly am. Do you know what happened to me after drinking your potion? I turned into a dog! And then I turned into a horse! What's your angle, Parker? Do you work for a zoo on the side?"

"A dog? A horse?" Parker's voice was genuinely horrified. "I don't understand."

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"Your potion didn't work," Reggie said angrily. "It didn't change me into a new character, it changed me into animals. And what are you going to do about it?"

PARKER was wringing his hands anxiously. His solid blue eyes were frantic.

"I'm terribly sorry," he said.

"Hah!" Reggie cried. "That does me a lot of good."

"I must have put in a pinch too much of something," Parker said meekly. "Or maybe I was just one pinch short of something else."

"Fine! Fine!" Reggie cried, as he paced up and down the floor like a caged tiger. "A pinch or so one way or the other and as a result I'm supposed to go through life like a chameleon." He stopped and glared at the little man. "And how did you know where to find me, anyway?"

"Well, I traced you from the bar where we met," Parker said abjectedly. "I wanted to see at first-hand how my experiment turned out. And when I got here I decided it would be interesting to get a mass reaction to my formula. That's why I gave a gallon of it to the colonel."

"What are you going to do about me?" Reggie demanded.

"Maybe I can try something else," Parker said hopefully. "If I worked real hard I might get the formula right in a few more months."

"Months!" shouted Reggie. "And what do I do in the meantime?"

"It might only take weeks," Parker said timidly. "Would that be too long?"

"Of course it would," Reggie yelled.

Parker sighed unhappily and two big tears welled from his eyes and trickled down his cheeks.

"There's nothing to do, then," he sniffed, "but give you the antidote."

"Antidote!"

Reggie spun and stared at the little man with incredulous, hopeful eyes.

"Do you mean you have an antidote for your potion?"

Parker nodded miserably.

"But it's a confession of failure if I use it," he said. "I had such great hopes for you," he sighed.

"Where is it?" Reggie asked. "Can you get hold of this antidote in a hurry?"

Parker drew a slim vial from his pocket and extended it to Reggie.

"Here it is," he said moodily. "Drink it and you will be immediately released from the effects of the original potion. And I," he added darkly, "will have to return to my laboratory and begin my work anew."

Reggie seized the vial and drained it at a gulp. His hands were trembling with excitement as he tossed the empty container back to the little man.

"Is that all there is to it?" he asked. "Am I really all right now?"

The little man nodded somberly.

"Perfect," he said.

Reggie felt an ecstatic flood of happiness coursing through his veins. Now he could tell Eileen again how much he loved her and, armed with the confidence that she returned his love, he would sweep her off her feet with his irresistible passion.

"I'm the happiest man in the world," he told the sad-eyed little man jubilantly. "Did you see that lovely girl at the table? She is my future wife! I'm going down and tell her so immediately."

The little man regarded him with brooding eyes.

"I don't like to interfere," he said, "but it might be wise to wait until they forget your peculiar actions at dinner. They all thought you acted rather odd,

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you know."

"Perhaps you're right," Reggie said judicially. "I'll wait until morning and then explain that I had a touch of fever tonight. Wouldn't do any good to try and explain the real reason for my conduct."

"I'll be going," the little man said sadly. He stood up and moved to the door. "I have a new idea to work on. One more little pinch of a sulphate and I think my formula will be right."

He opened the door and, with a last gloomy smile at Reggie, disappeared.

Reggie stretched out on the bed then and thought of the future with a blissful smile of anticipation. Everything was going to be absolutely glorious. He was completely happy, for, not being clairvoyant, he had no idea of the things that were going to happen to him in the next twenty-four hours.

Otherwise he wouldn't have been smiling!

CHAPTER VI

REGGIE slept fitfully that night until about three the following morning, but when he awoke he knew he wouldn't get back to sleep again. He was too excited by the prospects of his coming happiness and his nerves were jumping like Mexican beans.

Finally he decided a walk might relax his nerves. He got up, dressed, and let himself out of the house quietly.

There was no moon and the sky was like a huge black canopy. Reggie walked through the gardens, breathing deeply of the heady fragrance of the flowers and thinking of the glorious future he would share with Eileen.

He reached the stables a few minutes later, still walking aimlessly. He noticed idly that the double doors of the main entrance were standing open. He started to saunter past, but then he realized that this was a rather peculiar state of affairs. He stopped and peered into the dark interior of the stable. He could hear several of the horses moving nervously in their stalls, and he made out several dim figures in the darkness.

Something was obviously screwy, he thought.

"Hello!" he called cautiously.

He heard a whispered exclamation in the dark and then the slam of a stall door. And Reggie saw that the men were leading a horse out of the opposite end of the stable.

"Wait a minute!" he cried.

He walked into the stable, wishing that he had a box of matches or a flashlight with him to dispel the inky blackness. Suddenly he heard a truck motor roar into life and he saw that the dark figures at the end of the stable were running toward the sound.

Reggie also broke into a run. He felt sure now that someone was kidnaping the colonel's horse, Blue Star, which was scheduled to run in the big race Sunday.

"Stop!" he yelled.

Suddenly he collided with a figure in the darkness. He heard a muffled curse, then a fist slammed into his jaw and he felt himself falling. Another vicious blow struck him at the temple and he was going down and a thousand stars exploded in his head. He remembered hitting the floor of the stable and nothing else. . . .

A VIGOROUS hand on his shoulder roused him. He opened his eyes groggily and saw Colonel Ravenal leaning over him, holding a lamp in his hand. In the light cast by the lamp Reggie also saw Eileen and Mannering standing beside the colonel.

He sat up weakly and put his hands to his head.

"What happened?" he muttered.

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"That's what I want to know!" Colonel Ravenal said grimly.

"Blue Star has been stolen," Eileen said, and her voice was flat with despair.

"What were you doing in here at this time of night?" Colonel Ravenal demanded.

"I—I was just taking a walk," Reggie said feebly. "The door was open and some men were moving around in the darkness. One of them must have hit me, I guess."

"Did you recognize any of them?" the colonel asked.

Reggie shook his head miserably.

"It was too dark," he said.

Mannering said to Eileen in an audible whisper, "It all sounds pretty thin to me."

"You don't think I had anything to do with this, do you?" Reggie cried indignantly.

Colonel Ravenal turned away in disgust. His great shoulders were slumped despairingly.

"It doesn't matter," he said wearily. "Blue Star is gone and so are our chances for the race today. No, I don't think you stole the horse. You wouldn't have that much guts. But I'm sick and tired of having you underfoot, young man. You would be doing me a great favor if you would pack your bags and get out of here before I lose my temper and throw you out."

Reggie felt a sudden bitter anger.

"All right, you pot-bellied old goat," he said, "it will be a pleasure."

He got to his feet and strode from the stables. . . .

AS HE was packing the following morning there was a soft knock on the door.

"Come in," Reggie said, throwing a necktie into his bag.

The door opened slowly and Eileen entered the room. She stood just inside the doorway and looked at Reggie for a moment in silence.

"Well," Reggie said finally, "did you come to make sure the parting guest didn't abscond with the bed linen."

"I'm sorry about father, Reggie," Eileen said quietly. "I wanted you to know that."

Reggie shrugged and went on packing.

"It doesn't matter," he said.

"There's another thing," Eileen said. "I told Guy last night I wasn't sure I loved him. Does that matter?"

Reggie stopped packing and turned slowly.

"Does that mean you love me?" he demanded.

"Oh, Reggie, I don't know," she said distractedly. "I thought I loved Guy but when I saw you and realized how much you'd changed, I wasn't sure. But whether I love Guy or not, I have to marry him now."

"*Have* to marry him?" Reggie said incredulously. "Even if you don't love him?"

Eileen nodded miserably.

"You see, father mortgaged all of his holdings and bet them on Blue Star in today's race. Naturally he's lost everything now that Blue Star won't run. That's why he's so terribly upset. And that's why I have to marry Guy."

"I don't understand," Reggie said.

"Guy has money," Eileen said miserably. "Oh, I don't care for myself; it's father I'm thinking of. I can't let him down now that he's penniless."

"But you can't sacrifice your own happiness for money," Reggie said, in horror. "It's—it's un-American." He paced anxiously up and down the room, frowning. "But if Blue Star could run, you wouldn't have to," he said.

"That would be something else again," Eileen said.

Reggie lit a cigarette deliberately and

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frowned thoughtfully at the glowing tip.

"Let me get a few things straightened out," he said. "Did you tell Guy you weren't sure you loved him *before* Blue Star was stolen?"

"Why, yes."

"And does Mannering know your father has everything he owns bet on the race today?"

"Of course—but what are you getting at?"

"I'm not sure," Reggie said. But he was! He'd have bet his last dollar that Mannering had engineered the theft of Blue Star to force Eileen to marry him.

"Reggie, you aren't thinking that Guy had something to do with this, are you?"

Reggie didn't answer. Instead he picked up his hat and started for the door.

"Reggie, where are you going?"

"I'm not quite sure," Reggie said from the doorway, "but don't be too surprised if Blue Star is at the post today."

He blew her a kiss and left the room.

CHAPTER VII

REGGIE'S first stop was the colonel's garage, where he climbed into a horse van and then, after inquiring the direction to the Mannering estate, started the truck and drove down the winding lane to the highway.

It was about eleven o'clock then, and the race was scheduled for one in the afternoon.

He pulled up before the immense Mannering stables and got out of the truck. Guy Mannering was standing in the doorway, every inch the sportsman in riding breeches and polo shirt. His face was puzzled as he recognized Reggie.

"What brings you out here?" he asked.

"Just a simple errand," Reggie said calmly. "I came to get Blue Star."

Reggie watched Mannering closely as he spoke and he saw a momentary flicker of anxiety in his eyes. But it was hidden quickly behind an amused smile.

"And what makes you think I have Blue Star?" he asked.

"I know you have," Reggie said. "And if you don't produce him I intend to whale you within an inch of your life."

Mannering smiled and dropped his cigarette to the ground and crushed it out with the toe of his boot.

"You're being very funny," he said.

"I don't mean to be," Reggie said.

He stepped forward and doubled his fists.

"Now, just a minute," Mannering said quickly. "Maybe we can talk this over."

"All right," Reggie said. He dropped his hands to his sides. "Start talking."

"Well, I just thought we might get together," Mannering said. He shifted his weight slightly and glanced over Reggie's shoulder. "We aren't alone, you know."

Reggie looked around and saw no one, but before he could turn back, Mannering's fist crashed with stunning force into the side of his head. He went down limply.

Through the fog that seemed to be settling over him he heard Mannering laughing.

"Never lead with your chin, sucker," he said.

Reggie crawled dazedly to his feet and started for the sound of Mannering's voice. He swung wildly as he charged in, and he felt bone under his right fist.

He shook his head and saw Mannering sitting on the ground holding his

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jaw.

"Get up," he said. "You're in for a licking."

Mannering got cautiously to his feet and backed away.

"Now, just a minute," he said, "I——"

Reggie stepped quickly in and hit him twice in the face with all his strength. Mannering went down again and this time there was fear in his eyes. And Reggie knew that the man's magnificent physique and loud bluster concealed a heart the size of a dandelion.

"Where's Blue Star?" he demanded. "I'm through stalling."

"He's gone," Mannering said, scrambling to his feet. "He's too far away by this time to ever get here for the race." There was a light of triumph in his eye as he backed away from Reggie. "Your heroic act won't get you anything," he said.

"You're lying," Reggie said.

HE STARTED forward, but Mannering suddenly turned and ran into the stable, slamming the big doors shut behind him. Reggie could hear his efforts to slide the bolts home that locked the door.

Reggie lunged at the door, trying to wedge it open before Mannering could lock it. But the fumbling at the bolts had stopped and he realized despairingly that Mannering had bolted the door. With the frenzy of desperation he hurled himself at its solid wooden surface, and to his surprise it gave inward and he almost sprawled flat on his face.

There was no sign of Mannering, but his head-long rush brought him into collision with a large stallion that was standing just inside the door.

Reggie glanced at the horse automatically and then looked away. But something caused him to turn back.

The horse had the most bewildered, frightened expression on its face he had ever seen in his life. Its eyes were rolling wildly and when it saw Reggie it whinnied frantically.

Reggie stared at the horse and an incredible thought occurred to him.

But no! It couldn't be!

And then he remembered one important fact that made him regard the bewildered horse with a sudden grin.

For he had just remembered the potion the little man had brought to the Ravenal home. And his own efforts to prevent the colonel and Eileen from drinking any of the weird drug. He had knocked their glasses to the floor—*but he hadn't touched Guy Mannering's glass!*

And this bewildered looking horse could be——

"Guy Mannering!" he said.

The horse started and then nodded its head vigorously. The look of desperate terror on its face deepened as Reggie began to chuckle.

Its tail whipped about in an agony of fright and its eyes were fixed beseechingly on Reggie.

"You look very natural, Guy," Reggie said.

The horse whinnied piteously.

Reggie was so stunned by the fact that Mannering had turned into a horse, that he forgot for the moment that he still had a big problem on his hands.

But he did remember almost immediately. And he knew then he would never find Blue Star in time for the race, for the only person who could tell him where the horse was, wasn't in any position to do any talking.

His thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of a groom.

"I beg your pardon, sir," the groom said, "But I was looking for Mr. Mannering."

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The horse whinnied desperately and the groom turned to him with a frown.

"This is a new one, isn't it, sir?" he asked.

The horse shook its head desperately and pawed the ground, but Reggie suddenly smiled and slapped the horse sharply in the ribs.

"Yes, it is," he said. "Mister Mannering was going to buy it from me, but he changed his mind. Will you put a saddle and bridle on it, please, and help me load it into the van? I'm taking him out to the races today."

"Sure thing, sir. Pity Mister Mannering didn't want the animal. He's a beauty."

AN idea had occurred to Reggie that for sheer stupendous irony surpassed anything he had ever imagined or heard. It might not work, but it was the only thing left for him to do.

The groom threw a saddle over the back of the horse and tightened the cinches.

"What kind of a bit does he like, sir?" the groom asked. "Mister Mannering always uses a saw-edged bit for his horses. I don't like the idea myself—too hard on the horse—but some of them need it."

"So Mannering always uses a saw-edged bit, eh?" Reggie said reflectively.

"Yes, sir."

"Then I'll use one too," Reggie said decisively.

The groom took a bit and bridle from the stable wall, but the horse suddenly reared in fright.

"Down," the groom said sharply. He took a crop from the wall and shook it at the horse. "Or do you want a touch of this?"

The horse subsided and the groom slipped the bit into its mouth.

"Probably need a saw-edge on this one," he said. "He seems a little wild. Have you got a good crop?"

"No, I haven't," Reggie said.

"Take this one, then. If he gives you any trouble whack him on the tips of the ears. He'll behave."

"Thank you very much," Reggie said with a delighted smile. "Now just help me put him in the van."

"Sure. He looks like a good animal, but he needs a little disciplining."

"He's going to get it," Reggie said.

"Are you goin' to run him today?"

"You said it," Reggie said. "This is Colonel Ravenal's substitute entry for the race today. He's going to have his legs run right into his belly if he doesn't work."

The horse rolled piteous eyes at Reggie and whinnied despairingly.

"Let's go," Reggie said briskly . . .

THE band was playing *Boots and Saddles* when Reggie arrived at the track. A huge holiday crowd was on hand, and the packed stands were decorated with gay bunting.

Reggie drove directly to the judge's booth at the stables. He climbed out and ordered a Ravenal groom to take the horse from the van, then he looked up the judge, a gray-haired gentleman in a wide black hat.

"I want to announce a substitution for the Ravenal entry," he said.

The judge looked at him in surprise.

"I can't do that now, son," he said. "The horses are going to the post. Colonel Ravenal withdrew his entry about five minutes ago, anyway."

"He wants to reinstate it," Reggie said.

"Have they found Blue Star?" the judge asked incredulously.

"No, it's a substitute," Reggie said frantically.

"Waal," the judge said thoughtfully, "seems like it wouldn't be no race at all without a Ravenal entry. I guess we

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can do it. Who's your rider?"

"I am," Reggie said promptly.

"You ain't going to have time to change," the judge said. "Them horses are rarin' to go right this minute. And where's Mannering? Thought he was going to ride the colonel's entry."

"He's doing his bit," Reggie said cryptically. "Now make the announcement."

"All right, son, but you'd better hurry."

Reggie trotted to his horse and mounted.

"Now listen, Mannering," he said, leaning close to the horse's ear, so the grooms wouldn't hear. "You are going to run that race to win, understand? If you don't I'll flay you alive."

He dug his heels in hard and the horse started for the track at a fast trot.

The radio was announcing the substitution when Reggie rode onto the track. He saw Colonel Ravenal and Eileen standing in their box, staring unbelievingly at him, and then Eileen waved happily and he saw the colonel throw his hat into the air and slap the man at his side resoundingly.

The rest of the horses were at the gate and the starter was trying to get them off. Reggie snapped the crop down on his mount's flank and raced for the gate, but while he was still a dozen feet away, the starter's pistol cracked sharply, and the crowd was on its feet shouting, "They're off!"

Reggie yelled into his horse's ear, but with every foot he fell steadily back. At the quarter turn he was five lengths from the leaders, at the back stretch he was seven and when they swung into the three quarter turn he was full ten lengths behind and dropping further behind with every stride.

Mannering was deliberately throwing the race!

"All right!" Reggie yelled, "you asked for it!"

He brought his crop down in a swishing snap across the tip of the horse's ears.

"Run, you good-for-nothing sneak!" he shouted, bringing the crop down again with stinging force. The horse whinnied wildly and lunged ahead, its hooves driving into the hard track with a drumming roar.

"Get movin'!" Reggie cried.

THEY began to close on the pack, and when they hit the home stretch, they had passed the last two horses and were driving on the outside in a wild Garrison finish.

The stands were a solid roaring block of humanity as they roared toward the finish line, and Reggie was hanging on desperately to keep from being thrown.

Another twenty feet and they were pressing the leaders, and then it was neck-and-neck in a driving, furious finish with the horse that had led the entire distance.

"Come on!" Reggie screamed.

The horse under him found a burst of strength from somewhere and strained into the lead as they flashed by the finish line—winning by a nose!

Reggie swung the horse then into the lane that led to the stables and didn't stop until he had ridden the animal into the Ravenal van.

Then he jumped behind the wheel of the truck and roared away. He reached the Mannering estates in record time, climbed out and opened the rear door of the truck.

Guy Mannering was lying on the floor of the van, his sides heaving desperately and his tongue hanging almost to his waist. His hair was plastered wet with perspiration. He looked like a man who had run a horse race—which he had.

"Nice going, Mannering," Reggie

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grinned. "You were magnificient. Too bad you'll never get any credit for winning one of the most important races of the year."

"Go 'way," Mannering panted. "Let me alone. Never want to see you again."

Reggie took the young sportsman's collar and hauled him out of the truck.

"I don't think you will," he said. "I'm going back to the Ravenal's now to find out the date. Eileen wants to marry me. We won't be seeing much of you in the future, so, cheerio."

He climbed in the van and drove away.

EILEEN was waiting for him at the Ravenal estate.

"Darling!" she cried, "you were wonderful. But why didn't you wait after the race to receive the trophy? And father wanted to see you, to tell you how sorry he was for the way he acted."

"Time for all that, later," Reggie grinned. "Now I've got only one thing on my mind."

"And what is that?" Eileen asked demurely.

"This," Reggie said.

He took her in his arms and held her tightly.

"I never want to let you go," he murmured.

"Why, Reggie," Eileen smiled, "I think you're turning into a wolf."

"My God!" Reggie cried.

He shoved her away and looked down at his legs apprehensively. Then he began to smile nervously.

"Reggie, darling, what's the matter?" Eileen asked.

Reggie took her in his arms again and kissed her soundly.

"Nothing," he said, "but I didn't know you were referring to this kind of wolf."

FANTASTIC—BUT TRUE

By ALEX WAMAN

Facts such as these prove that fantasy is not confined only to fiction!

WHAT child hasn't read stories about porcupines that shoot their quills at approaching enemies? Do these animals really *shoot* their quills?

It is a common but erroneous belief that porcupines shoot or throw their quills at an enemy when attacked. Just as the hair stands up on a cat's back, the quills or spines are concealed in the fur and assume an upright position when the animal is disturbed. These quills are loosely attached to the body and come out upon the slightest contact with other objects.

When attacked, the porcupine thrashes about actively with its tail and, if the tail comes in contact with underbrush or other objects, the tail quills are likely to be knocked out or detached. Frequently, the quills are scattered around to a considerable extent. It is under such circumstances, then, that the observer gets the impression that they are voluntarily thrown or shot at the enemy. Only the thrashing and flicking of its tail send the quills falling about—there is no conscious effort to shoot them: the porcupine's "artillery" is really only accidental.

Animals which attack porcupines often get quills imbedded in their flesh. Dogs which attack porcupines, for example, usually get their noses full of quills for their pains.

The great naturalist, John Burroughs, said this about the porcupine:

"Touch his tail, and like a trap it springs up and strikes your hand full of quills. The tail is the active weapon of defense; with this the animal strikes. It is the outpost that delivers its fire before the citadel is reached. It is doubtless this fact that has given rise to the popular notion that the porcupine can shoot its quills, which, of course, it cannot do."

* * *

SELF-PRESERVATION among animals is a well-known fact to all of us, but the fact that plants also have devised various means of preserv-

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ing their existence against the attacks of their enemies is not so well-known.

First of all, there are the plants that use mechanical means as protection against animals feeding on them; examples are the thorns of the cactus, crabapple, and blackberry; the prickly leaves found on holly and thistle; the razor edges of various species of swamp grass.

Then there are the plants that use a chemical method of protection; the ragweed has a bitter taste, while the oxalis is very sour to eat; the skunk cabbage depends upon its nauseating odor to keep would-be attackers at a safe distance. The nettle takes no chances and thus combines both methods in its small poisoned glass daggers.

But plants have other enemies beside the animals to think of. Nature is fickle and sometimes a drought will occur. Since plants cannot seek out water and cannot live without it, they must always have a supply on hand against the time when it may become scarce. Some of the plants like the cactus and century plant have thick juicy stems or leaves to store their water. The reduced evaporating surfaces on the leaves of the conifers and the stringy stems of horsetail rushes conserve the precious water supply in times of scarcity. The liveoak and mesquite have leaves with a harsh and leathery texture as their protection.

In similar manner, all plants have been given some means of protection to insure a long life and time to reproduce so that the species will not disappear.

* * *

HAVE you ever wondered how plants can withstand the terrific heat the sun pours down on them, especially from noon to mid-afternoon when the sun's rays are hottest?

Dr. H. H. Laude has been experimenting with plants to find out the answer to this question and he claims that the sun's light in the morning gives the plants its parathermal stimulant which enables them to take the sun's heat rays in the afternoon.

To better study and prove this theory, Dr. Laude planted several varieties of ordinary grain crop plants in rooms in which he could control the amount of light or darkness as well as the temperature. One of his observations was that a plant taken out of a darkened room and subjected to a temperature of 112 degrees would suffer much more than would a plant that had been allowed to stand in the forenoon sunlight for several hours before it was subjected to the high temperature. He further discovered that artificial light produced about the same protection for plants as did the sunlight. If he kept a 200-watt lamp burning over night in a room near the plant, it showed only slightly more than one-third as much injury as did a plant that was kept in a darkened room when they were both subjected to a temperature of 120 degrees for five hours the next day.

Just how this parathermal property of light operates on plants is not known. Dr. Laude suggests, but does not state positively, that the action may be due to the formation of photosynthetic products in the plant. He hopes to find a definite answer through continued research.

* * *

NOT to cause suspicion of our fellow men, it must necessarily be stated that among us, in decreasing numbers, to be sure, live agents of disease and death. These people are known as "carriers" meaning that they carry disease. We all know people who have had colds, maybe even tuberculosis. Nevertheless, we should be wary of them because of the fact that we too may derive sickness from them.

Many interesting cases are on record of these dealers of death. One woman, called "Typhoid Mary," an almost legendary character, was a cook; whomever she cooked for contracted the typhoid plague. Numerous catastrophes, many involving death, were ascribed to this poor woman. She was chased from here to Cuba and back. As a solution to the problem of "carriers" our government tries to remain in touch with these people and sees that they are placed on jobs which do not bring them into close contact with other persons.

A treacherous crime is recorded in one of our Southern states. Here many people in one small town contracted typhoid. Everybody wondered about the cause. After several weeks of careful observation, bacteriologists observed that some milk which was labeled "Pasteurized" contained typhoid organisms. Now this cannot be! Typhoid organisms are killed in the process of pasteurization as are all other organisms which cause disease. A careful checking was made of the dairy company to see if the fault lay there. There was absolutely no trace of typhoid organisms in the milk which the dairy had pasteurized. The only conclusion was that somebody tampered with the milk after it left the dairy and before it reached the customers. Sure enough, it was discovered that the milkman who delivered milk in the town was the culprit. Every morning he filled his bottles half with water which he took from a well near the town. This well-water was polluted and therefore contained typhoid organisms. The result of this milkman's attempt to make a profit was seen in the obituary columns which recorded the deaths of the people of this town. We must all exercise care and our social conscience so as not to deal out such horrible works.

REMEMBER!

BUY WAR BONDS REGULARLY OUT OF EACH PAY CHECK

BACK THE ATTACK—WITH WAR BONDS

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LEFTY FEEP

By ROBERT BLOCH

The wrong answer sent Lefty into the future. The right questions got him out

"WHAT do you want to take me here for?" asked Bill. "I thought you were my friend. But when I come to town you immediately try to steer me into the most awful-looking restaurant I've ever seen. I'll bet the food is terrible!"

I smiled at Bill. "I'm not taking you to Jack's Shack for the food," I told him, as we entered the place.

"Then what?" Bill persisted.

"There's a party here I'd like to have you meet," I explained. "I think you'll be interested."

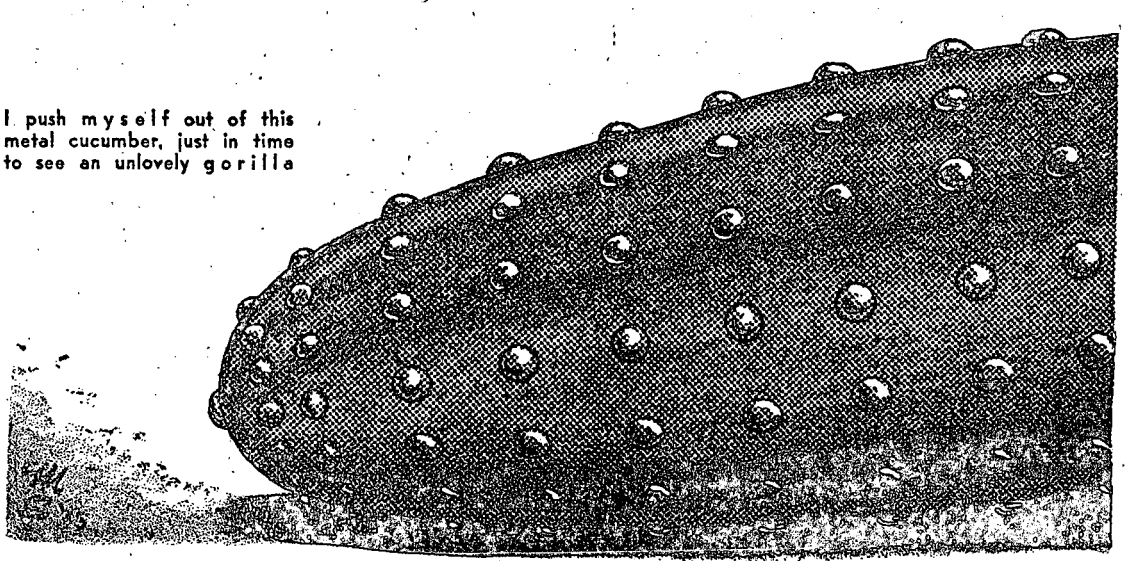
"Who is he?"

"His name is Lefty Feep. And he tells some of the damndest yarns you've ever heard in your life. He's just an innocent bystander at life's little accidents — but to hear him talk, he has more adventures than Baron Munchausen."

"You mean he's a professional liar?" Bill asked me.

I shrugged. "I wouldn't call him that. In fact, I wouldn't know exactly how to describe him. Lefty Feep is — well, I'll introduce you now and you can judge for yourself."

I took Bill by the arm and steered



I push myself out of this metal cucumber, just in time to see an unlovely gorilla

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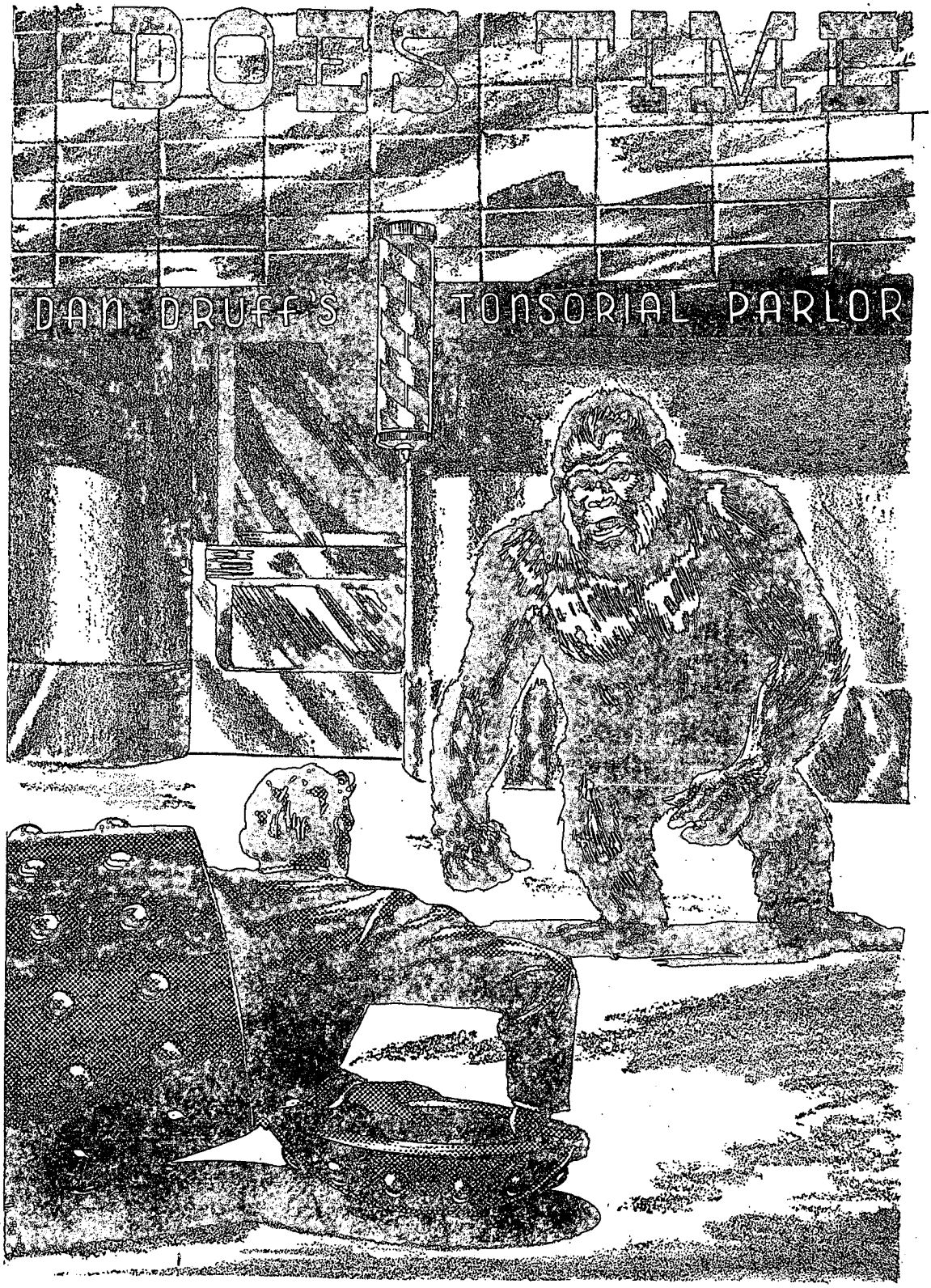

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him over to a table. Lefty Feep sat there, nonchalantly trimming his fingernails with a butter-knife. As he saw us approach, Mr. Feep waved and beckoned. There was a genial smile on his usually melancholy face.

"Hello," he called. "Accept my greeting at this meeting and what are you eating?"

I introduced Bill, we sat down, and gave our orders to the waiter. Bill shielded his eyes, and I didn't blame him.

Lefty Feep, in addition to his dazzling smile, was wearing a blinding costume. A sort of super-zoot suit with bolder shoulders, and trousers that were wowsers. The whole garment was done in a sort of subdued scarlet with yellow stripes. A purple shirt and orange-and-green necktie added to the general effect — which was nauseating.

I sympathized with Bill. His eyes hurt him now, and I knew that in a few minutes his ears would hurt him as Lefty Feep pulled another one of his stories.

Sure enough, the tall teller of taller tales cleared his throat for action.

"Lucky you contrive to arrive," he told us. "It so happens I have a terrific adventure yesterday about which I have things to say."

I nudged Bill. "But Lefty," I objected. "Are you sure it was yesterday this adventure took place? I saw you yesterday, all day."

Feep never blinked. "Yesterday," he insisted. "And I am away all day."

"But I saw you!" I insisted.

"What you see is me to a degree," said Feep. "But while I am here I am also somewhere else. Only that is another time."

I perked up my ears and poked Bill. "Bill," I said. "This ought to be a problem for you. After all, you're a writer of science-fiction."

That did it. Feep crouched over the table, eyes bulging.

"You write science-fiction?" he gasped. "Then indeed I must ask you to heed as I proceed. Because I got a truth that's stranger than science-fiction. Listen ——"

"Make it short," I interrupted. "Bill and I haven't got much time."

"That's what happens to me," declared Lefty Feep. "Boy, what a time I don't have yesterday!"

Feep opened his mouth. We opened our ears . . .

WHENEVER I am on the beach I go to see Skeetch and Meetch. Sylvester Skeetch and Mordecai Meetch are two giants of science who run the HORSECRACKER INSTITUTE — a laboratory where they conduct experiments on the stuff in various things. You see, when I am broke I often go up there and they give me a chance to put dough in my pants by helping them with their experiments.

That's the way it is yesterday. I am very broke because my ex-wives are pulling some phoney baloney about alimony, so I feel moany and groany and being definitely broke but stoney, I root and toot over to the HORSECRACKER INSTITUTE.

Sylvester Skeetch and Mordecai Meetch are sitting in the gloom of a big room. But their two fat little faces go through the paces when I march in. They smile and exchange looks — which is no bargain for either of them.

"Lefty Feep!" exclaims Skeetch. "Just the personality we wish to see!"

"What brings you here at this propitious moment?" asks Meetch.

"Hunger," I explain.

Fat little Skeetch and Meetch shake hands with me and lead me to a chair. I sit and stare at the blank walls of the laboratory with a look to match.

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"Why are you glad to see me?" I ask. "And where is all your scientific apparatus?"

"Come with me," says Mordecai Meetch. "I will explain."

Skeetch and Meetch lead me down a hallway into a large white-tiled room which looks as though it should have a GENTS sign on the door.

This room is also bare, but there is a large object, very big for its massive size, right smack in the middle of the floor. It is covered by a black curtain, and also by my curious glance.

Suddenly, from around in back of the covered object steps a new personality.

He is wearing a white coat like Skeetch and Meetch, and he sports the same kind of thick goggles. He could pass as a double of theirs, or a triple.

"Lefty," says Skeetch, waving a fat finger at the stranger, "I would like to introduce our new scientific associate. Meet Cosmo Creetch."

Cosmo Creetch puts out his hand and makes with the shakes.

"Pleased to meet you," he mumbles. "Any colleague is always welcome. You have scientific standing?"

"I take mine sitting down," I answer.

"But," he persists, "are you interested in physics?"

"No," I tell him. "I just drink a glass of warm water every morning."

"You don't understand," Creetch murmurs. "I don't mean that kind of physics. This deals with higher figures."

"Speaking of higher figures, I meet a tall blonde once —"

"No!" sighs Creetch. "Not that. We are discussing mathematics."

"Well, I might be interested in mathematics," I confess. "You see, I owe a lot of dough."

"Then you're just the man I'm looking for. Perhaps you can earn some money by helping me do this."

I cheer up. "Watch me holler for a dollar," I tell him. "What can I do for you?"

"First let me ask you a question," says Cosmo Creetch. "Do you know what a Time Machine is?"

"Yeah. An alarm clock."

"No!" Creetch scowls. "Here, I'll show you." He walks over and pulls the cloth off the big object in the center of the room.

I STARE at a big steel cylinder, covered with metal bumps and shaped like an overgrown cucumber. There is a door at one end and Creetch pushes me over to the entrance.

"Step inside," he invites. I look in at a bare room inside the cylinder. It resembles a cell for solitary confinement.

"Looks like a jail," I comment. "You mean a guy should be put in here when he does time?"

"You don't do time, you pass through it," Creetch explains.

"Pass through it?"

"Of course. This is a vehicle. It can be steered ultrasiderally," he tells me. "Observe the panel board."

He points to one wall, covered with switches and dials. The dials are numbered, and there are little slide inserts under them. "Months" and "Days" and "Years" and Centuries" and even one that says "Eons". There is also a calendar built right into the steel wall. Under each slide is a dial and a switch.

"It's very simple," Creetch insists. "You turn the dial to any year, month or day you desire and you can travel backwards in time."

I shake my head. "Travel backwards in time? I don't see any future in it."

"Why it's got a great future! You can travel into the future any time you

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want and to any time you want," Creetch tells me. "Here is the future feature fixture."

He indicates another blob of knobs. "Understand," he confides. "This machine operates on a very logical basis — a mere process of molecular acceleration, synchronized so as not to disturb the normal metabolic process of the human body inside, which is protected by the insulation of the machine itself. This molecular acceleration will carry you forward through the spacetime continuum and you will emerge undamaged at the precise point indicated by rhomboidicality as governed by the process."

"Sure, sure," I answer. "Why bother with such childish details? I figure it out the minute I see it. Why don't you buy yourself a zoot straitjacket and forget it?"

Creetch gets mad. "I'm not deceiving you, Mr. Feep!" he snaps. "This machine will take a human being forward in time. All we need to prove it is to get the services of a human being. And if that's impossible— well, maybe we can use you."

"Yes," adds Skeetch. "We want you to try out this Time Machine."

"Nobody is taking me for a ride!" I yell.

"Of course not," says Skeetch. "You'll go alone."

"I refuse to be two-timed!"

"For $100?" purrs Cosmo Creetch.

That changes my mind. The way I am sitting financially, I will take a climb into time for a dime.

"How about right now?" Creetch urges. "Just take a blast into the past. I'll set the sight for about a hundred years back."

I FOLLOW him into the hollow of the machine. He shows me the two types of dials — foresight and hindsight — and explains what I am to do. Merely turn on the machine, which will transport me through time in a juicy jiffy. Then get out and grab something to bring back — proving I make the trip. That is all there is to it. He tells me how to operate the crate so there will be no slip on a return trip.

"Set the dial for a trial," he advises me.

I study the switches to avoid hitches.

"You know, the past does not appeal to me," I confess. "How about peering into the future?"

"You're steering, so do your own peering," Creetch agrees. "Just set a course to suit yourself."

I fiddle with the dials and turn the "Years" and "Months" and "Days" knobs.

"There!" I exclaim. "Exactly five hundred years! February 29th, 2544. Leap year — it works out."

"Give it a workout, then," Creetch tells me. "Here's your $100. Let me get out of here, turn that master-switch, and bon voyage!"

He leaves. I shut the big silver door. I am all alone in the steer cylinder. I go up to the panel and reach for the master-switch.

I pull it. There is a hell of a howl and five hundred years blast past my ears. I fall to the floor as I feel the machine churning and turning. My stomach matches it.

Then, all at once, the machine seems to land with a bump, and my stomach settles back into place with a thump.

Everything is a riot of quiet.

I make a score with the steel door. I open it slowly and stick my noggin outside. And I do mean outside!

Because I am not in the HORSE-CRACKER INSTITUTE any more.

MY TIME Machine lands me in a deserted street. All around me

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are huge skyscrapers and a lot of planes cutting capers. But the buildings are taller and the planes are smaller. I nearly break my neck trying to see the top of these edifices, and I shiver as I watch a lot of wingless little planes dart in and out of the buildings above.

Then I realize that the street is deserted because everybody is flying. Most people's affairs seem to be conducted on a very high level these days.

Sure as I'm alive, this is 2544, or I miss my score!

I take a few steps away from the Time Machine and gander at the building nearest at hand. There are a couple of stores on this ground floor and I notice a sign — "DAN DRUFF'S BARBER SHOP."

As I stare, the door of the barber shop opens and out steps the shape of an ape!

I blink as this big furry gorilla strolls out and down the street. What kind of monkey business goes on here?

The ape shape approaches me and I try to hide in the shadow of the Time Machine. But it spots me and comes closer. I see its slavering jaws, its great brawny arms. I shudder and cringe. The ape seems to growl. I retreat. The ape lowers its head. Its hideous mouth opens. In a moment it will charge and ——

"Pardon me, buddy," lisps the gorilla. "You got a match?"

I nearly elapse into a collapse.

"A talking ape?" I yell. "What goes on here?"

The ape shrugs. "Sure, why not?" asks this simple-minded simian.

"But apes can't talk!" I object.

"Who says they can't talk?" snaps the ape. "Don't you ever read THE HOWLING BABOON COMES BACK? Apes talk in that story. So do I!"

He reaches for a match I hold out and pulls a cigarette from behind one furry ear.

"You smoke?" I gasp.

"Of course. Nothing like a smoke when you climp out of a barber chair. I just step in there to get my fur singed."

I shake my head. "How can it be possible?" I mutter. "A talking ape. Why?"

"Why?" echoes the ape. "I talk because I have a human brain in an ape's body. My name is Andy the Anthropoid."

"Human brain in an ape's body?" This begins to sound like a vaudeville routine, but I am really curious now. "Who would do such a trick?"

"Why the Mad Scientist, of course! He makes me — he makes everybody these days, in his laboratory. He just looks into one of the books of wisdom and then experiments."

I look at Andy the Anthropoid in some astonishment. "What books of wisdom?" I inquire.

"Don't tell me you never hear of books of wisdom," sighs the talking ape. "You must be a stranger."

"I am a stranger and I feel stranger and stranger," I tell my furry friend. "But what are the books of wisdom?"

"I never see any, understand," says Andy the Anthropoid, lowering his voice and looking over his shoulder to be sure we are alone. "Nobody ever does, except the Mad Scientist. He locks them up in his laboratory and it is forbidden to discuss them. But I hear rumors, of course.

"In the old days the books of wisdom are called 'mackascenes,' or something."

"You mean 'magazines'?" I suggest.

"That's it. Magazines. Science-fiction magazines, in the ancient past. I remember I even hear some of the titles of the forbidden volumes. There

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is *Superdooper Science.* And *Gory Stories.* And *Flabbergasting Tales* And *Staggering Imagination,* and *Impossible Adventures.*"

I shake my head. "Never hear of them," I confess.

"Can it be possible that there is anyone alive in 2544 who never knows of the books of wisdom?" he demands.

"Can be," I admit. "If this is really 2544."

"Are you crazy?" asks the ape.

"No. Just a stranger. I'd like some kind of proof of where I am and when this is."

"Well, it's 2544, all right," Andy the Anthropoid insists. "Wait — I'll get a paper and show you the date to prove it."

HE STEPS over to a lamp post. I wonder what he is going to do, because there is no paper-box attached to it.

But he merely presses a button set in the post and comes back.

"Where's the paper?" I ask.

"Be patient," he tells me. "We want the latest edition, don't we?"

He squints up at the sky. "Here it comes," he yells. "Stand back."

Out of the air whizzes a little silver cone. It looks like a miniature rocket, landing at our feet. Andy the Anthropoid picks it up and opens one end. Out drops a folded newspaper.

"See the date?" he says. "2544, all right."

So it is. But I pay no attention. My eye happens to light on the advertising columns—the want ads.

I read a few items at random.

"Space Suits For Sale — With two pairs of pants."

"Ray Guns and Atomic Blasters from private collection of an ex-rocketeer."

"Used Space Ship, late 2543 model, in good condition. Only 5,000,000,000,000,000 miles on it. With two spare fliers."

"Sale — Green Cheese, direct from the moon."

I gasp for air, also for information. "Is it all true?" I ask the garrulous gorilla. "Are all these things really existing? These inventions?"

"Of course," sniffs Andy the Anthropoid. "They all come from hints in the books of wisdom. But here's a fellow now who can tell you all about it," he says, pointing down the street.

I look for the fellow, but I don't see anyone.

Until I spot it—gleaming in the sun. Then I nearly fall down. The hinge slips on my jaw, I am so astonished.

Walking towards me is a hunk of animated junk. A piece of live metal in fine fettle, with a tin grin and a shining body. A living mechanical man, so help me!

Andy the Anthropoid introduces us. "I want you to meet Adam Clink, the robot," he tells me. "What is your name, sir?"

"Mud!" I reply. "No—my name is Lefty Feep."

"Lefty Feep? A pleasure I treasure," squeaks the robot in a tinny voice. He grabs my hand and it makes a perfect fit in his steel mitt. I look at his skinny steel frame and shudder.

"I suppose the Mad Scientist dreams you up, too?" I ask.

"Of course," says Adam Clink. "Straight from *Impossible Adventures.* A direct steal in steel."

"I am trying to explain such matters to Mr. Feep," chimes in Andy the Anthropoid. "Perhaps you can give him a short history. He seems to be a stranger and he doesn't even know what happens here on earth."

"Yes, what on earth happens?" I ask.

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ADAM Clink turns his shining face and gleaming smile towards me. Then he begins to deliver a lecture on history.

To condense it for the dense, here is the way things happen in the past couple hundred of years.

It seems that war is the original score. A big war that wipes out almost everything—buildings and people both. When the shooting stops it is for a simple enough reason—there is nothing left to shoot at and darn few people left to pull the triggers, anyway.

So many buildings are gone that there are no longer any laboratories or factories or stores or offices or libraries. Nearly all the knowledge and science in the world is blown away.

After peace gets under way, the survivors take a look around and try to rebuild the world. But there is very little left to go by, and the war continues so long that no one is left who remembers how things are run in the old days.

In a word, the world starts from scratch all over again.

Or almost from scratch. Because, digging around in the ruins, somebody runs across a stack of the books of wisdom.

A screwy coincidence, that's all it is—but the science-fiction magazine library of a fan name of Orville Fuzz is all they find left in the matter of printed matter.

Of course there are doctors and engineers and professors left who can remember various facts and figures, but when they get to talking, they decide something like this:

"The world is always on the wrong track, somehow. Maybe we better listen to some of the prophecies and forecasts of the future in this science-fiction stuff. Let us rebuild the world according to such ideas and see what happens. At least, it is worth trying."

Which is just what they do. Using science-fiction stories for models, they set to work. At first they do not get very far. And then the Mad Scientist comes on the scene, just a few years ago, and he changes everything.

That's what Adam Clink tells me, anyhow.

"Ever since the Mad Scientist takes control we do all right," he tells me confidentially.

"How come he is put in charge?" I ask.

"Why don't you know what the books of wisdom say?" Adam Clink comes back. "The stories about the future almost always have a Mad Scientist in them. So it is only natural that we allow such a personality to rule. He does all right, too.

"Of course, the first thing he does is hide all the books of wisdom in his laboratory. No one else ever sees or reads those science-fiction tales any more. They are his property. He reads them and then invents things they suggest. Like me, for example."

"He invents you?"

"Yes, and a whole race of robots. We do the work in the new world."

"And in his spare time he turns out rocket ships and space suits and skyscrapers and planes and little things like Andy the Anthropoid, here?" I persist.

"Right." Adam Clink stares at me. "Say, you are pretty uninformed," he tells me. "Who are you and where do you come from?"

"But I tell you, I'm Lefty Feep," I stall.

"But where do you come from?" insists the robot. "And what is that contraption over there?"

I give up trying to conceal the deal. "I come from 1944," I announce. "And I arrive in a Time Machine."

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ADAM Clink rattles all over in excitement.

"A visitor from the past!" he squeaks. "In a real Time Machine?"

This surprises me. "I always figure those science-fiction stories are full of Time Machines," I say. "Don't tell me you haven't got any."

"We have, once," Andy the Anthropoid growls. "But the Mad Scientist won't let us use them. He doesn't want anyone to escape into the past or future because he is afraid they will get their tenses mixed. So he gets rid of all of them."

"How does he do that?"

"Oh, he seals them up in a time capsule," the ape explains. "But say—you'll have to come and meet the Mad Scientist," he tells me. "He will want to talk to such an unusual visitor."

This does not appeal to me. Visiting a crazy guy who hates Time Machines 500 years in the future is not exactly my idea of a way to spend the day.

But Adam Clink's iron hand grabs my shoulder, and Andy the Anthropoid drapes his ape shape across my back, so off we go.

We walk down the street and turn the corner.

"Better take a cab," suggests the ape. Adam Clink nods his metal head. He pulls a little gadget from a belt around his waist and points it up in the air. A streak of flame shoots out.

From above darts a gleaming, wingless plane. It swoops straight for our heads, but makes a perfect landing only a few feet away.

"Atomic generation," whispers Adam Clink.

We walk over and the driver sticks his head out. "Where to, gents?" he pipes. "Venus — Mercury — the Bronx?"

I roll my retinas at him—because when I say the driver sticks his head out, I mean he really sticks it out. About five feet.

He has a neck like a rubber band, and I rubber at it. On top of the neck is a face I don't want to face. Something like a balloon with teeth. I goggle at this gargoyle.

Adam Clink and the ape notice it as we get in the cab.

"What's the matter, does the sight of a stratotaxicab upset you?" asks Clink.

"No, it's the sight driving it that upsets me," I answer.

"Him?" growls Andy the Anthropoid. "Why, that's just a man from Mars."

"Mars?"

"Sure. A man from Mars—like the ones in the books of wisdom."

The driver hears us and turns his long neck around.

"The books of wisdom are foolish!" he declares.

I expect my companions will object to such a statement, but they don't.

"These Martians are always criticizing," explains Adam Clink. "They do it in all the stories. Pay no attention."

The driver hears this. "What do you mean, pay no attention?" he yells. "Just like you robots. Got no emotion, no feeling. *Oo-yay are an ump-chay.*"

"Must be speaking in his strange Martian tongue," mumbles the ape.

"I can speak better English than you can, you simian simpleton!" yaps our driver. "My name is Martin the Martian."

"Pleased to meet you," I reply politely.

"I don't blame you," answers Martin the Martian. "Now, where do you want to go?"

"Take us to the Great Laboratory," directs Adam Clink.

"Aw, what do you want to go there

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for?" objects Martin the Martian. "Why don't you go where you can have some fun?"

"Always criticizing," grumbles Adam Clink to me. Then he raises his voice to the Martian driver. "Pull in your neck and take us to the Great Laboratory at once," he orders.

OFF we go in a cloud—or into a cloud. Because the stratotaxicab suddenly soars straight up into the air. I cling to the strap in the back seat and look down at the map at the back street.

And in a split second we are down and out again. This time we land on the roof of a skyscraper. Martin the Martian opens the door for us. A rubbery tentacle helps us alight.

"Here you are," he grumbles. "You earthlings are certainly crazy. As we say on Mars, just an *unchbay of erks-jay.*"

Leaving the driver gibbering in his weird Martian dialect, Adam Clink, Andy the Anthropoid and I take an elevator from the roof down to the 400th floor.

After a lot of preliminaries with white-robed attendants and bearded elders—"All the books of wisdom have bearded elders attending the scientists," explains Adam Clink—we are walking into the great white-domed laboratory of the Mad Scientist.

There, under the glow of carbon arcs, calmly splitting an atom with a simple electro-divisory-atomic-bisect-or-oscope, stands the Mad Scientist himself!

He doesn't notice us, being so busy trying to split this atom into equal parts. So I get quite a chance to stare at the baldheaded man with the red face and angry frown as he bends over his work.

"He doesn't look so crazy to me," I whisper to the ape.

"Crazy? Who says he's crazy?" answers Andy the Anthropoid.

"But you call him the Mad Scientist, don't you?"

"Of course. And that's why we choose him. The books speak of a mad Scientist and he is mad."

"Then he must be crazy."

"Not crazy," the ape repeats. "Just mad. You know—angry!"

I get it, then. When they read the science-fiction magazines they misunderstand. They think a Mad Scientist is a guy with a bad temper. The idea makes me laugh.

My laugh makes the Mad Scientist notice us.

He stares and glares.

"What the devil are you doing in my laboratory?" he shrieks. "Get out of here—I hate you!"

"But, sir—"

"Shut up before I lose my temper!" screams the Mad Scientist; throwing a test-tube at Adam Clink.

"Please sir, we have a visitor—Lefty Feep—"

"Get out of here before I disintegrate the lot of you!" howls the irate investigator. "I suppose he's another hero type, come to marry my daughter. I am sick and tired of heroes running around making love to my daughter. Just because her father is a Mad Scientist, they seem to think it's expected of them. I've got a good mind to melt your molecules, Adam Clink! And as for you, ape man, I'll sic some fleas onto your fur in a hurry if you don't remove that below-zero hero type!"

"But he's not a hero—he's got a Time Machine!" explains Adam Clink.

THE Mad Scientist opens his mouth and stops at mid-froth.

"A Time Machine!" he groans. "Why don't you tell me this before? Of course I want to talk to him. Clear

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out, you two. Leave me alone with Mr. —Gleep, isn't it?"

"Lefty Feep," I tell him, as the robot and the ape leave the laboratory.

"Well, well," purrs the Mad Scientist, wiping his bald head. "Won't you sit down? Try that table over there. Just move that jar with the human head in it, will you?"

I move the jar. "Take it easy!" yaps the human head. "You're jolting my solution out of balance."

I drop the jar with the head in a hurry.

"What a thump!" the head complains. "Now I've got a headache. Would you mind slipping an aspirin into my mouth?"

"Yes, I would mind very much," I gulp.

The Mad Scientist fixed up the head with a bromo seltzer as I sit down and try to relax. Then he turns to me.

"Now what's all this about a Time Machine?" he asks.

So I tell him my story, sketching in my past but fast.

"Very interesting," he remarks when I finish my recitation of explanation.

He paces the floor. "You know, sometimes I think I make a mistake when I seal up all the Time Machines and plans for making them in a time capsule where nobody can discover them," he tells me. " A device like that can be valuable."

That is where I see a chance to do myself some good.

"Bet your life!" I grin. "For instance, I am doing a lot of thinking just now and I get a very neat idea."

"What is your idea?"

"How about you and I going into business?" I suggest.

"What business?"

"Well, you might call it the travel business. Time travel!"

He frowns. It is a new idea to him.

"Sure," I assure him. "You are the big shot in these parts and I have the Machine. What say we rent it out to various parties who want to take trips into the past and future? Why, in a scientific age it will be all the rage! We can make millions!"

I am very hep with pep over this notion, and so I do not notice at first when the Mad Scientist starts turning lavender around the jowls. But in a second he is positively deep purple in the puss and I cannot help but notice it. Besides, he is yelling very softly, like a moose caught in a moose-trap.

"Thunderation!" he howls. "By Einstein, quit talking about that infernal machine of yours. I almost forgot who might hear us."

"Hear us?" I ask. "Why do you care who hears us?"

"Well, Adam Clink and Andy the Anthropoid know already," mutters the Mad Scientist. "That's bad enough."

"Why is it bad?"

"Because they are jealous of me, that's why," he tells me.

"Almost all of my creations want to rule earth, you know. Adam Clink is only one of thousands of robots. The robots feel they should run things instead of just working in factories. And my other creations, like the ape men, are also restless. Then there's those ungodly carping critics, the Martians."

"I meet one," I admit.

"Blue blazes!" curses the Mad Scientist, hopping up and down in a rage. "Then they know about it, too! Almost any of them will be trying to get hold of your Time Machine and use it as a means of getting control of the others — and the earth."

"I have the key safe in my pocket," I reassure him. "Nobody can operate it."

"But they know," grumbles the Mad

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Scientist. "They know. And you mustn't talk so loud or *they* will hear you."

"They?"

"Yes," whispers my eccentric experimenter. "They will hear you, and then ——"

"I hear you!"

IT IS not a voice that tells me this. It is a thought. Yes, inside my skull I can feel the words. *"I hear you!"* comes the message.

"Too late!" groans the Mad Scientist, tearing the place where he once has hair. "The jig is up!"

"What is that?" I inquire. "What is that message I just get?"

"It comes from the Great Brains," the Mad Scientist sobs.

"Great Brains?"

"By telepathy," he tells me. "You see, when I rebuild the world according to the books of wisdom, I try to get everything right. According to Hoyle, or Binder, or Hamilton, or Cummings, or Burroughs, or O'Brien and McGivern — all those authorities, who write in ancient times.

"So I invent rocket ships and superskyscrapers and atomic blasters and all that stuff. And I conceive of a society composed of layers.

"First I invent robots, like Adam Clink, to work in factories and build buildings. That's all they do — work.

"Then I make a few apes like Andy the Anthropoid, just to keep animal life going with more intelligence. Pets, sort of, you might say.

"On top of that, I permit the Martians to land here to take over a few jobs and stand around and criticize everything. I hate criticism, but that's all Martians ever do when they come to earth — except, of course, when they invade it. But that's another story, or a couple hundred other stories in the books of wisdom. Anyway, the Martian criticisms sometimes give me ideas for improvements.

"So there we are. Robots for work, apes for local color, and Martians for criticism."

"What about people?" I ask.

"People? What people?" sneers the Mad Scientist. "Don't you notice that yet? There are no people, except for my daughter — and she's always getting herself kidnaped to other planets or some place. I am the only living person on earth that I know of. We don't need people any more."

I blink. "Then what about that telepathy we just hear?" I ask.

"Oh, yes — I am coming to that. After inventing all these types, I decide to complete the world with my masterpiece — straight from the books of wisdom. So I invent the Great Brains."

"What are they and why?"

"They are the ones who help me with my thinking," the Mad Scientist declares. "That's all they do — sit around and think. Just like Great Brains always think in the science-fiction stories. They can use telepathy. They have remarkable powers of concentration and perception. They know everything. And now it seems they sense your presence and the presence of the Time Machine. So we might as well visit them at once and see what they have to say."

He opens a door at the far end of his laboratory.

"Come," he suggests.

I FLING myself down a long hallway, following at his heels. We stop before another door and he opens it.

"Lefty Feep," says the Mad Scientist, "meet the Great Brains."

I enter a dark velvet-draped room. And there I am, face to face with the Great Brains.

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Only I am not face to face — because the Great Brains have no faces!

There are three of them in this room — perched on three separate pedestals Three enormous blobs of wrinkled gray. There are no arms, legs, bodies, or faces attached to the giant jelly-heads. All I can see are brains — three brains, the size of barrage balloons.

Looking closer, I notice that they are not mounted on pedestals but on five-foot bookshelves.

"You are in the presence of intelligence," whispers the Mad Scientist. "Be very humble. They have their pride — a very overweening pride."

"Swelled heads, eh?" I whisper. "Well, in a matter of gray matter I myself am dumb in the cerebrum. But perhaps I can teach the Great Brains a new wrinkle."

"You are Lefty Feep?" comes a telepathic thought from my left.

I turn to the enormous gray mass and nod.

"You have a time machine?"

I nod again.

"We want it."

"But wait a minute ——" I object.

"Do we get it peacefully or must we hypnotize you? We can destroy you with the power of our thought. Do not try to trick us, Mr. Feep—we know all, see all, hear all, and are superior to everything. We cannot be baffled."

"So this is what happens to Quiz Kids when they grow up," I mutter.

"We are waiting" the thought comes. The gray masses bend forward on their bookshelves and I get queazy but uneasy. I am hot on the spot. I must answer ——

The door opens behinds us. The Mad Scientist wheels and reels.

Adam Clink stands there, waving a monkey-wrench.

"I just come from a mass-meeting of robots down at Automaton Hall," he announces. "Robot Workers Union Number Nine votes that you must turn over the Time Machine to us immediately or we will throw this" — and he points to the monkey-wrench — "into your machinery."

"They mean it!" rasps the Mad Scientist. "I always know they will stage a revolt eventually.

"We also demand more oiling," continues Adam Clink, waving a steel finger in the air. He points his rigid digit at the Mad Scientist's nose. "We always want more oil — it lubricates us and we work faster. So remember, give us oil and the Time Machine or there'll be trouble."

"We get the time machine now," telepaths the thought from the Great Brains.

I am now on a double spot.

AND the door opens again. This time only a head sticks through the opening — sticks through about five feet. It is Martin the Martian.

"Mars calling Earth," yells Martin. "We Martians just confer and wish to report that we feel ourselves — as superior beings from another planet — to be entitled to the use of the Time Machine Lefty Feep brings here. In the words of our Martian proverb, unless we get that Time Machine at once, *our-yay oose-gay is ooked-kay.*"

A triple spot!

"Nobody gets to use that machine but me!" thunders the Mad Scientist. "I'll blast everybody if you cross me — I'm getting very angry, I warn you! Feep — give me that key to the Time Machine!"

A quadruple spot!

I am jumping around from one spot

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to another in a hurry. What do I do now?

I clear my throat and turn to the whole crew.

"Men, metal, Martian, and mental!" I address them. "You all demand the Time Machine. There is only one solution. You must give me time! Time to decide — time to choose which one of you deserves to have this wonderful device. Give me six hours to think."

"*Very well*" comes the thought from the Great Brains. "*But meanwhile we will be thinking too — thinking up a pretty nasty fate for you unless you give us the machine.*"

"Six hours," squeaks Adam Clink. "Then we get our oil and the Time Machine or you get this," and he brandishes the monkey-wrench near my noggin.

"I'll wait," promises Martin the Martian. "But if we don't get satisfaction, Mars invades earth! You and your Time Machine will be *up-ay the eek-cray*, as we Martians say."

"Give me that Time Machine in six hours or I'll get so mad I'll tear down the Empire State Building and hit you over the head with it," snarls the Mad Scientist. "That's the way they do it in the books of wisdom."

"Quiet!" I yell. "Let me think! Clear out of here, all of you!"

They leave me and this does not grieve me, believe me!

I stand in the room with the Great Brains, trying to figure out where to start.

Running back to the Time Machine and using my key and getting the blazes out of here is a good idea — but I am sure Adam Clink's robots are watching it and will not permit me to escape.

So I am racing and pacing from facing this situation filled with aggravation.

If I cannot get out of here, I must get out of my problem. I must use my brain.

Better still, why not use *their* brains? The thought strikes me. Here are the Great Brains. Perhaps I can trick them into helping me somehow without their knowing it.

But how?

Maybe they can answer questions for me. Questions about the other groups, for example.

That's it! They will not hesitate to tell me the weaknesses of their rivals — the Martians, the robots, and the Mad Scientist, for example.

I TURN to the Brains and smile.

"Who is the head man around here?" I ask.

"*You mean which one of us is the wisest?*" telepaths a thought.

"Yep. Which skull is the least numb?" I inquire.

"*We are all wise,*" they telepath. "*No thought eludes us and no problem deludes us. We can answer all questions on any subject.*"

"Good." I flash a face that is smiling and beguiling. I turn to the nearest of the three Great Brains and aim my words right at the center of the massive mass of this terrible but cerebral creature.

"How can I get rid of the Martian menace?" I ask.

The Great Brain seems to sense my purpose and naturally this seems like a good way to dispose of a rival group. So the Brain telepaths.

"*A simple matter. What do the Martians do on earth?*"

"Why, I hear all they do is criticize."

"*Precisely. Therefore, in order to rid the earth of the Martians, first rid it of everything they criticize. If there is nothing left to criticize they will get bored and go away. Simple solution for a superiority complex.*"

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Maybe it is, but it is no solution for me. How can *I* get rid of everything? Ridiculous answer!

So I turn to the second Great Brain and ask, "How can I destroy Adam Clink and his robot race?"

"The robots are making demands. Satisfy their unwise demands and they will destroy themselves."

This doesn't sound like a hot plan from the brainpan either. In fact I can't figure it out.

So I yammer, stammer, and clamor at the third Great Brain.

"How can I get rid of the Mad Scientist?" I inquire.

"Simplicity itself! Merely see to it that there is nothing for him to get angry about. Then he will no longer be a mad scientist."

Another screwy answer! By this time I begin to think my own thoughts about how wonderful the Great Brains are.

"Assorted almonds, pecans, cashews and other nuts to you guys!" I yell. "You're just a bunch of overstuffed fakes! You claim to have all the wisdom in the world, and I'll bet you can't even answer a simple question," I jeer.

"We answer anything," the first Brain telepaths.

I am so mad I don't know what I'm saying. "Oh yeah?" I yell. "I bet you can't even tell me why firemen wear red suspenders."

"Firemen wear red suspenders?" the first Brain flashes. *"Wait a minute now . . . . is it because fire engines are red?"*

"Wrong!" I snicker.

"Wait . . . why do firemen wear red suspenders? . . . There must be a reason . . . ."

The first Great Brain swells up and I can see it folding and unfolding as it attempts to think that one out. I grin and turn to the second Brain.

"As for you," I chuckle, "perhaps you can answer this question — why does a chicken cross the road?"

"Chicken? Road? Why does a member of the genus gallus traverse a public thoroughfare? Wait a minute . . . there must be a mathematical or ornithological catch to this . . . why does a chicken cross the road? I — I ——"

"Ha!" I shout. I turn to the third Great Brain. "As for you, answer me this — how high is up?"

"How high is up? How HIGH is up? How High IS up? HOW high is up? How high is UP?" telepaths the baffled Brain.

BY THIS time all three Great Brains are racking themselves all over the shelves. They swell and puff and contract and expand and I can see their cells revolving.

"Oh what a headache I have!" telepaths one Brain. *"What's the answer?"* telepaths another. *"My migrane is killing me!"*

I get a tremendous hunch about this bunch. They are being confronted with problems they cannot answer and it hurts. I think of a super question.

"Listen, all of you!" I yell. "Here's one that will really bother you. What's the difference between a duck?"

"What's the difference between a duck?" the Great Brains telepath.

"Yes, what's the difference between a duck?" I repeat.

"Difference—Duck? Oh, I can't think straight! It hurts to consider it! My poor aching head!" the great Brains telepath me.

They swell and jell, and as I watch, the Brain on my left suddenly flows off the shelf.

"I'm afraid," it telepaths, *"that I have a splitting headache!"*

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It is all too true. In a second the Great Brain splits right in half!

The second Brain wobbles a moment and then it also falls and splits. The riddle is too much for its mentality.

"What's the difference between a duck?" telepaths the last Great Brain, writhing in agony. *"There must be an answer."*

"Guess," I insist. "Guess, if you're so smart."

The Brain turns positively black with effort. Then, *"I've got it!"* comes the message. *"What's the difference between a duck? Answer—One leg is both the same!"*

Of course, this is the right answer. But the effort is too much for the Great Brain. As the telepath comes, the last Brain gives one leap into the air and explodes all over the room.

The Great Brains are through.

By using my brain, I destroy their brains.

Now for the Mad Scientist, the Martians, and Adam Clink's robots.

How to cope with them in a few hours?

I keep remembering the advice the Brains give me—the screwy advice. About the robots now—don't they tell me to satisfy their unreasonable demands?

What unreasonable demands? Asking for the Time Machine is reasonable, if they want power. But do they ask for something else, too?

Then I remember. They want oil. They ask to be oiled more in order to work faster.

Robots always want more oil.

Suppose I give it to them?

It's a wild hunch, but I can try it.

In ten minutes I go to the Mad Scientist back down the hall in his laboratory. In ten more minutes he listens to my scheme and agrees with me. Ten minutes later I have the key to the oil storage tanks. Ten minutes after that I am confronting Adam Clink with the key, as he sits in the Robot Workers Union headquarters at Automaton Hall.

"Oil," I tell him. "I bring you the keys for the oil you want. Am I your pal or am I not? Eh, Adam?"

Adam Clink grins his grin of metallic mirth.

"Great work, Feep!" he squeaks. "Now we can have all the oil we want. We can speed up production in the factories and build our buildings faster. We robots will really go to town. I'll release the grease to all the robots."

He issues orders over a televisocastor and I accompany him on his oil distribution.

IT IS a thrilling sight to see five hundred robots drain the big oil tanks into huge containers and then drive the containers to the gates of the skyscraper factories. Here the robots line up in queues, each with its oil-can extended, to be filled from the spigots of the tanks.

In about an hour all the robots are are well-oiled.

"It's great to lubricate!" yells Adam Clink, in triumph, as the last robot gets his share. "Now let's really work full speed ahead."

The robots wave their dripping oil-cans in a salute and their cheers hurt my ears.

Then they move back into their jobs.

"Robots are happy when they work," says Adam Clink, oiling up his joints liberally. "And the more they can work the happier they are. The Mad Scientist won't give much oil—claims if he does the robots speed up too much and wreck everything they touch. How foolish! We like to work fast!"

I peer through the window of the nearest factory and see things are

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really humming. Robots, just dripping oil at every joint, are hammering and clanging and banging away. But there is something peculiar-sounding about their pounding. A discordant note. A frantic rhythm. They are off the beam. They sound as if they are well-oiled.

That's it! They are well-oiled. Oil to robots is like liquor to humans. It takes the rust out of their frames, they think. But it also loosens them up, makes them careless and wild.

And even as I watch, the robots start to show the symptoms. They reel. They wield hammers and drop crowbars all over the place. They don't throw the switches on their machinery. They do everything at such top speed that in a few minutes machines are exploding and factories are shaking.

But they are too oiled up to stop or even notice. From far away comes a clang and a thundering roar as a building topples over. Robots working on it misplace some girders, I suppose.

And now the whole superskyscraper city is shaking as the thundering factories go haywire.

"Satisfy their unwise demands and they will destroy themselves," the Great Brains tell me. And it's true!

Adam Clink reels off drunkenly down the street. Buildings fall before him. He pays no attention. He looks to me as though he has a couple of screws loose.

It is all too true. A few screws do come off his well-oiled neck and in a minute Adam Clink is falling to pieces. His arms drop off as he flounders around.

Now the robots are fleeing the factories in droves as explosions drive them out. They lurch around, and I see that the oil loosens their nuts and bolts until the poor nuts are bolting all over the place.

The robots are being destroyed.

I get out of that section of the city, but fast. The Great Brains and robots are done for now. But I still have the Martians and the Mad Scientist to reckon with.

And time is short.

I head for the building where the Mad Scientist has his laboratory. I head for it fast, dodging falling masonry as I go.

But I am too late. Out of the sky swoops a gleaming plane.

MARTIN the Martian sticks his head out a few feet and spots me. Then he sticks his tongue out a few feet.

"Nyaaah!" he says. "We Martians won't wait. We are coming to invade this stupid earth."

I shrug. I lose after all. Martin the Martian points up at the sky.

"They are here, just clear of the stratosphere," he tells me. "When I give the signal, they will swoop down with their greater disintegrators, and wipe everything off the map."

"Why?" I ask. "Why do you want to do that? What is earth worth?"

"Nothing," the Martian admits. "But we superior beings don't like to see it run so stupidly. All these Brains and robots now—they're silly. They offend us."

I fake a laugh. "Well go away," I suggest. "Your troubles are over. I destroy the robots and the Great Brains." And I tell him how.

His face falls about five feet on his long neck when he hears this. His Adam's apple wobbles on its long stem.

"You mean they no longer exist?" he mourns. "We cannot have the fun of destroying them and all their civilization?"

"That's right. There's nothing left for you to invade or criticize," I tell him. "Nothing on earth. You are wel-

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come to come down and rebuild it to suit yourselves, though," I add. "You criticize so much, I figure maybe you want a chance to run things of your own way."

Martin the Martian scowls. "No!" he sighs. "We are destructive critics only. If there is nothing we can destroy or feel superior to, we aren't happy. Just for that, we won't invade earth after all. I'll go back and tell the gang. I think we'll leave earth and invade some place else."

"Why not try Mars?" I call after him, as his plane soars aloft again.

"Good idea!" he yells.

And that is the last I see of the Martian menace.

I run upstairs to the laboratory where the Mad Scientist waits. And he is waiting for me, definitely.

As I come through the doorway he stands up. His bald head gleams. So do his teeth. So does the horrible ray-gun he holds in his hand.

He points the ray-gun at me. I stop dead in my tracks, wondering how soon it will be.

"So," he snarls. "You destroy my Great Brains. You ruin my robots. You drive away the Martians. The whole city is crashing to ruins. I am furious!"

"Calm down," I advise him. "Be very calm."

I sit down next to a bookshelf and pretend to smile.

In a minute I do smile, because I remember what the Great Brains tell me. They advise me correctly about getting rid of the robots. And they tell me that the Martians will leave when there is nothing to criticize—which they do.

And now I recall what they say about the Mad Scientist. He will be all right when he has nothing to get mad about, they prophesy.

So I open my mouth and tell the Mad Scientist what happens.

"You see?" I conclude. "You are always mad about the robots and the Martians rivaling you — and they are gone, now. You are mad about having to run the city—and it is almost in ruins. You are angry with the Great Brains. They will never trouble you again. So what is there to be mad about? Be happy and forget it!"

BUT the Mad Scientist doesn't look happy. From what I can see of his face behind the foam on his mouth, he is frothing with rage.

"You—you——!" he shrieks. His hand whips out. The ray-gun blazes.

I duck, just in time.

The ray-gun passes over my head and blasts into the bookshelves behind me. There is a searing, sizzling sound, a single flash, and then the bookshelves disappear!

"Yeeeooooow!" screams the Mad Scientist. "Now look what happens!"

"What?" I ask.

"Those bookshelves I blast—you know what they contain?" he yells.

"No."

"The books of wisdom, that's all!" he yammers. "I just blast the precious books of wisdom in that bookshelf!"

I grin. "So what?" I shrug. "Doesn't that solve everything? Stop and think a moment—what makes you so irate of late? Just having to invent all of those things you read about in the science-fiction magazines.

"Now there are no magazines. No more rules and regulations for you to live up to. You can sit back, relax, be yourself. Why don't you leave this stuffy laboratory and get out in the open and live?"

The Mad Scientist smiles.

"You can get a little farm," I continue. "Plant a few acres and putter

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around. That's the way for a man to live. All this super-stuff is super-silly."

He beams at me. He puts the ray-gun down.

"You aren't mad any more?" I ask.

"No," he chuckles. "I feel great."

"Then you'll let me take the Time-Machine back to my own day and age?" I ask.

"Go ahead, and bless you," he tells me.

He sits there humming as I go out the door.

I prowl through the twisted streets until I find the Time Machine, still shining and spotless, on the pavement where I leave it early in the day.

I open it up with the key, press the dials on the panel, and then I'm off.

Off into unconsciousness. Off into oblivion. Off into the past. Off——

And on again. I wake up sitting on the floor in the laboratory of Skeetch and Meetch. Funny thing is, the Time Machine I sit in has no panel in it.

I open the door and rush out. "Hey, boys!" I yell. "I don't do it! Honestly ——I don't remove the panel from the Time Machine."

Skeetch and Meetch stare at me in the other room, and Cosmo Creetch looks up.

"There is no panel on the Time Machine," he tells me. "I will not finish it until tomorrow."

"Won't finish it?" I ask.

"And how do you know about the Time Machine?" snaps Cosmo Creetch. "Who are you, anyway?"

"How do I know? Who am I? Why I'm the guy you hire to take a trip into the future in the Time Machine."

"When do I do that?"

"Earlier today."

"But how can I?" Creetch insists. "I never see you before in my life. And the Machine is not completed yet so how can you take a trip?"

"Are you kidding?" I inquire. But Skeetch and Meetch nod their heads. They agree with Creetch. As far as they are concerned, I never come up to their laboratory at all.

So I tell my story and they all shake their heads.

"Don't understand it," Creetch murmurs. "Unless you make a mistake when you come back in such a hurry. Maybe you set the panels for one day before the time you are supposed to."

"What do you mean?"

"When you are in the future, do you set the return switch for the same date five hundred years earlier—for February 28th, 1944?"

"Yes," I insist.

"Well—then I don't understand it. Unless, of course——"

I interrupt him. "No," I gasp. "I set it for the 29th of February. Because I leave here on the 29th."

"But that's tomorrow!" objects Creetch.

"I've got it!" yells Skeetch. "You leave here on the 29th, of course. But 500 years from now—in 2544—they must abolish the extra day in February for Leap Year. So 500 years from now is falling on February 28th. When you come back you arrive on the 28th, one day earlier than you start.

"Consequently you never start at all."

I sigh. "I give up, boys," I tell them. "But it certainly is an exhausting trip I don't take."

* * *

LEFTY FEEP finished his story and sat back. His beady eyes darted from my face to Bill's.

"So you see," he concluded, "Truth is stranger than science-fiction, after all. And you see me yesterday even if I am not here. Understand?"

"No, I don't," I confessed. "Anyway, there's one consolation. If you

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never went into 2544, then the civilization won't be so bad, because it doesn't exist and never will."

"Please," said Lefty Feep, raising a a hand. "Do not confuse me any further. I do not wish to think about science-fiction any longer."

"I don't blame you," murmured my friend, Bill. "But say, it's been a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Feep. You certainly have the most remarkable adventures."

"Yes," grinned Lefty Feep. "And I think this is one of the most remarkable adventures I ever had in all my life."

ONE OF THE WAR'S GIFTS

A NEW TYPE SOAP

ABOUT the only person who is happy about our possible soap shortage is Johnny, who thinks he can get away from taking his Saturday bath and abolishing the terrible ordeal of washing his neck each morning. And, we almost forgot, Pete the pup who welcomes that chance of being washed every other week instead of weekly. But, much as it grieves us to be the bearer of sad tidings to these two, we must nevertheless report that the soap situation is well in hand. In fact, the solution can be summed up in one word, Nacconal. Not only is Nacconal a present answer as a replacement for soap but it is also so vastly superior to soap that it is here to stay.

Soap, although it has its good points, also has several drawbacks. Soaps are effective when used in soft or hot water, but they balk down in hard water and acid solutions, and form a soap curd that hinders the washing process and sticks to the things being cleaned. In those localities possessing hard water, it is necessary to add a water softener before a satisfactory job of clothes washing can be performed.

But now we have Nacconal, the wonder cleanser made as a by-product of the oil industry. Neither acid, or alkaline solutions produce a problem to this all around cleanser. When used in either hot or cold, hard or soft water the results are always the same—a clean wash.

In addition to being more effective, Nacconal is less expensive to use. In soft water approximately 25% as much Nacconal is required as soap while in hard water only 16% as much is needed. In extremely hard water, Nacconal works with ease while soap doesn't even work at all.

But that's not all this wonder cleanser does, It can be used to clean vegetables since it is non-poisonous, colorless, and tasteless. It will not harm the finish of the car or the furniture and when it is rinsed off the surface it polishes as the surface dries. It can be mixed into lubricating motor oils, to keep the motor clean at the same time it is being lubricated. It can be used as a bubble bath by mi-lady and mother will like it since it automatically removes the well-known bath tub ring. And, believe-it-or-not, it may be added to angel food batter to produce a smoother and finer textured cake!!!

It acts much quicker than ordinary soap and does the job in only 10 to 25% of the time. This greater speed requires less soaking time for woolens which cuts shrinkage in the materials to a minimum. Moreover, woolens washed in Nacconal are given a very effective moth and mildew protection.

When the dog is washed with the cleanser, the fleas are killed effectively and at the same time the malodorous oils of the dog's fur are removed. The cleaner can also be used in almost every industrial job that soap formerly performed.

And so the fact that the vegetable and animal fats that formerly produced our soaps are being drafted for war uses does not frighten us in the least. For today we can get an almost limitless supply of Nacconal from the oil by-products. Although we may have to give up a lot for the duration, our Saturday night bath is one thing that stays unaffected. Sorry, Johnny—

BUY WAR BONDS

Don't let the cost of this war pile up a huge mountain of debt that will rob your children of a chance to be happy and to live the life that is rightfully theirs!

PAY YOUR OWN WAY TO VICTORY AND PEACE!

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There was the sound of breaking timbers as the heavy figure began to topple

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THE CURSE OF EL DORADO

By P. F. COSTELLO

SECOND Lieutenant Harley Smith looked down eight thousand feet at the South American jungle that spread beneath him like a lush green carpet. From that height the jungle looked cool, remote and beautiful. A river wound like a silver thread through the bright emerald of the smooth underbrush.

That was the impression at eight thousand feet, but Harley knew the jungle at close range; he knew the appearance of cool, lush beauty was very deceptive. The tangled jungles and forests of this area were a stinking, festering, snake-infested matting on ground that was a swampy morass—steaming, treacherous and trackless.

Harley glanced sideways at his co-pilot and grinned.

"Looks nice from up here, doesn't it?"

The co-pilot, Johnny Elwell, looked over the side and shook his head disgustedly.

"It never looks good to me," he said

A falling plane brought two Americans to a forgotten race, a group of Nazis, and the curse of a golden idol

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dourly. "You can have the jungle and I'll take vanilla."

Harley's eyes roved over the instrument panel as they talked. He was a big, solidly built young man with brown hair and eyes. His hands were muscular and strong, but their touch on the stick was as gentle as a woman's.

The plane he was flying was a twin-engined army bomber, with a six-man crew. Their present trip over the jungled interior was a routine observation flight from their squadron base on the coast of Peru.

"We shouldn't kick," he said. "We've got a pretty cool spot for our field."

"That's small compensation," Johnny Elwell said. He was tall and slightly built, but there was whip-cord toughness about his movements. His face was thin, and a lock of blond hair fell perpetually over his left eye. At Randolph Field, several thoughtless cadets had made the mistake of dubbing him Mister Veronica Lake. What had happened to them, drastically and quickly, had prevented the nickname from spreading.

"Why don't they send us to Africa?" he demanded. "Or the Pacific? MacArthur needs bombers, doesn't he? Why do we hang around down here?"

"Well this area has to be kept under aerial observation," Harley said.

"Why?" Johnny demanded.

Harley glanced at him. "You really want to know?"

"Of course I do."

"In that case," Harley said, poker-faced, "you'll be glad to know that General Arnold is in Washington. I saw it in the paper the other day. You can cable him when we get back to the field. And don't let him evade the issue."

Johnny sighed disgustedly.

"What a gay, joyful life you lead," he muttered. "Little Sun-beam the Second. You ——"

HE STOPPED speaking as an ominous cough suddenly sounded in the right motor. The plane side-slipped as the power failed momentarily.

"What is it?" he asked tensely.

Harley was studying the instrument panel with grim eyes.

"Don't know," he said. "Flash the word to the crew. We may have to get out of here in a hurry."

Johnny picked up the radio mike and contacted the navigator, gunners and photographer. His orders were brief and curt: "Right motor missing, prepare to hit the silk if the skipper thinks it's bad."

He dropped the mike and glanced at Harley's tense, set profile.

"Think you can limp in with one motor?"

"Maybe," Harley said. "If we're lucky ——"

The plane suddenly dropped into a twisting, vertical dive. Harley watched the spinning needle of the altimeter as he fought to steady the ship.

"Tell the men to jump!" he snapped to Johnny. "Right wing is buckling. We're going to crash."

Johnny snapped the orders into the mike and then stared at the crazily spinning altimeter needle:

"2000—1800—1650——"

"Jump!" Harley snapped at him, without taking his eyes from the instrument panel.

"How about you?"

"Damn it, jump!" Harley yelled, over the screaming of the wind. "I'll take care of myself."

"Okay," Johnny said, as he scrambled out of his seat; "but don't wait too long."

Harley waited until the altimeter registered fourteen hundred feet be-

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fore he knew that there was no chance of saving the plane. Then he leaped toward the nearest parachute hatch and went out headfirst.

For an instant as he plummeted down he was afraid his parachute would become snarled in the plunging ship; but it flashed past him as he tugged at the rip-cord, and when the big white umbrella blossomed above him, the ship was hundreds of feet beneath. He felt the welcome tug of the 'chute, and then he was swinging back and forth, falling toward the ground at about twenty feet a second.

He saw the ship crash and burst into flame. A minute or so later his swinging feet brushed the top branches of a tree; he avoided several of the branches as he fell ground-ward, but he was brought to an abrupt jerking stop as the parachute caught and tangled in the upper branches.

Forty feet above the swampy ground he hung suspended, swinging gently back and forth. He could see the smoke arising from the wreckage of the plane, several hundred feet away. He wondered anxiously about Johnny and the crew. Johnny should be in the immediate vicinity, but the rest of the crew might be miles away. They had jumped several minutes before he and Johnny, and a minute in the air meant miles on the ground.

He cut himself from his parachute, then climbed cautiously to the ground and headed for the wreck of the plane. Johnny, he surmised, would do the same thing. There they might be able to salvage some equipment they would need badly on their trip back to the coast.

IT took him almost fifteen minutes to claw his way through the tangled underbrush to the plane. His face was cut in several places from the stinging backlash of low branches and to the middle of his thighs he was plastered with slimy mud.

Within fifty feet of the plane the heat of the blaze forced him to stop. He leaned against a tree and stared at the scene of destruction. The slim silver beauty of the ship had vanished and it was a blackened, twisted mass of flaming metal. There wouldn't be much opportunity of salvaging anything from that wreckage, he thought bitterly.

He stood there for ten or fifteen minutes watching the blaze helplessly.

A shout from behind caused him to turn quickly.

Johnny was fifty yards away, limping toward him and waving one hand in the air. His clothes were plastered with mud and there was a trickle of blood running down his cheek from a cut on his forehead.

Harley felt a sense of relief that left him weak.

"A couple of bad pennies, I guess," he said, when Johnny reached him. "That's all we are." He patted the lanky blond awkwardly on the shoulder. "I never thought I'd be this glad to see anyone in my life. What's the matter with that leg of yours?"

Johnny leaned against a tree, sighed, and lifted his left foot from the ground. Under its wind-burn, his face was white.

"Nothing much," he said, tight-lipped. Twisted it a little when I landed. It's not broken."

"We'll take care of it," Harley said. "How far from here did you land."

"About half a mile," Johnny said. "I saw the smoke from the plane and headed over here as fast as I could." He looked straight at Harley and his candid blue eyes were worried. "How about the others?"

"No sign," Harley said, with a shake of his head. He glanced about and his

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forehead furrowed with tiny lines of anxiety. "They're probably miles from here," he added.

"Harley," Johnny said suddenly, "let's don't kid each other. We haven't got a chance in the world of getting back to the field and you know it."

"We're going to get back," Harley said stubbornly. "I didn't join the Air Force to find a grave down here in this damn jungle. And neither did you. So stop worrying about not getting back. We'll do it."

"Hear! Hear!" Johnny muttered. "Noble sentiment and all that, but not very practical. Have you got any idea of what we're up against?" He gestured toward the blackened wreckage of the plane. "Maybe you'll fly Lulu Belle back?"

Harley shook his head with a grim smile.

"Nope," he said, "Lulu Belle has made her last trip. Kind of tough on the old girl. But we're not through. We're about three hundred and fifty miles from the coast, and slightly northeast of our field. That's rough figuring but we can't get much closer without instruments." He frowned for an instant as he made a mental computation. "At twenty miles a day we'll be home in a little over two weeks."

"Fine," Johnny said, "but how about food and water? I'm not trying to be a pessimist, but let's look at things straight. There's damned little water in this neck of the woods. And no cafeteria service, either."

"We've got revolvers," Harley pointed out. "We should be able to shoot a few birds. And we'll find water, don't worry."

"Okay," Johnny said tiredly. "Who am I to withstand all this Rover Boy enthusiasm? But I got a better idea. This leg of mine is going to slow us up quite a bit, so," he smiled cheerfully, "why don't you go on and send back for me? That way we'll both——"

"Shut up," Harley said. "We've got more important things to do than waste our time with that sort of nonsense. Let's take a look at that leg of yours."

"But Harley," Johnny protested, "can't you see what I mean? You've got a chance alone; with me as baggage you'll never make it."

"Will you stop babbling?" Harley said mildly. "I've suspected you for a long time of having a streak of ham in your make-up and now I'm sure of it. You're just aching to make a corny dramatic gesture. This isn't Beau Geste so forget about being noble."

"All right," Johnny said with a sigh, "we'll play it your way. Let's get to work on this leg of mine. Tomorrow morning we should be on our way."

THE following day they covered almost twelve miles. Johnny's ankle was strapped with a cloth bandage made from his shirt, and Harley had cut him a walking-stick that was almost as good as a crutch. But each of those twelve miles was like walking an eternity in hell. The ground gave treacherously under their boots and many times they slipped waist-deep into slimy mud; branches whipped at their faces and clothes and the sun hung in a white sky like a molten ball of brass.

They rested that night.

"That wasn't so bad," Harley said, when they'd stretched out on one of the few dry patches of ground they had encountered.

"I hope it doesn't get any worse," Johnny croaked. He looked at Harley and shook his head. "We're just foolin' ourselves, I'm afraid. No water, no food and still about three hundred and forty miles from the field."

"We'll make it," Harley said. But

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as he turned over and closed his eyes to get some sleep he was wondering just how they were going to do it. . . .

SOMETHING awoke him later that night. He had no idea of the time. It was a dark night and the oppressively humid air was still. Johnny was sleeping beside him with an arm flung over his face.

He sat up carefully and glanced around. But in the blackness he could see nothing. The trees that ringed the small clearing were like black shadows on a dark curtain.

He came slowly to his feet. His nerves were tingling. He shook Johnny cautiously and whispered to him to be quiet. Johnny sat up and gripped Harley's shoulder.

"What's up?" he asked tensely.

"Don't know," Harley answered. He glanced around the clearing again, and his imagination seemed to be playing tricks on him. For some of the shadows that were moving in the fringe of trees resembled human forms. And he heard an occasional rustling on the ground that might have been made by human footsteps. This sound, he decided, was what had awakened him.

"I'm going to take a look around," he whispered to Johnny. "You stay right where you are."

"Now wait a minute," Johnny hissed in a plaintive voice, "you can't go hogging all the fun. I'm going with you."

"No you're not," Harley said fiercely. "This is a one-man job. Now sit tight."

He moved away from Johnny, stepping as softly as he could over the dry, hard ground. When he reached the trees he stopped and listened until his ears ached from the dead stillness; then he proceeded on, making a cautious circle on the outskirts of the small clearing.

He was beginning to think he had been victimized by his jumpy nerves when he saw a shadow directly before him, move back into the deeper blackness of the trees. No sound accompanied the movement. The shadow simply faded away like a wraith.

He stopped, every muscle tensed. With a curious sense of foreboding he knew that something was about to happen. The feeling was in the ominous stillness, the unnatural hush of the jungle. It couldn't last.

And it didn't!

But when the deathly stillness was shattered, Harley was too shocked to move.

A voice with an unmistakable German accent said, "Now!" loudly and crisply. The voice emanated from the shadows of the trees and it cracked with authority.

Almost immediately a g l a r i n g l y bright light slashed from the blackness and bathed the clearing with its searing white brilliance.

Harley backed involuntarily, throwing one hand before his face against the blinding brightness of the light. Johnny was still sitting in the center of the clearing, too stupefied to act. His blond hair was in his eyes and his face looked as white as chalk in the light.

Harley recovered first and his hand dropped to the revolver at his side.

"On your feet, Johnny!" he snapped.

Johnny scrambled awkwardly to his feet and stared at Harley.

"What the hell's up?" he yelled.

"I don't know," Harley said rapidly; "but let's get out of this light."

FROM the darkness behind the brilliant light, a mocking voice broke into laughter and then another command, delivered with the same German accent, rang out.

"Krauts!" exploded Johnny.

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"Let's get moving!" Harley snapped. His gun was in his hand as he began backing toward the trees on the opposite side of the clearing from which the light was situated.

He heard a rustling sound behind him and wheeled suddenly. From the shadows of the trees a dozen figures were springing into the lighted clearing. He had just one brief panoramic glance at them, but they were stamped on his memory, in that instant, forever.

They were tall, splendidly muscled savages light brown in color, dressed in gaudy skirts that hung from their waists to the middle of their thighs. Bands of golden metal circled their arms and wrists, gleaming brightly in the light. Their faces were lean and strangely aristocratic, with thin nostrils and wide dark eyes.

The instant it took Harley to see this much was all the time he had for details. For each savage held a knotty club in his hands, and from the grim set of their faces there was no doubt in his mind what they intended to do with them.

He raised his gun and shot the closest savage. The man fell spinning to the right with the impact of the bullet in his shoulder, but his lean, grimly stoic features did not change expression as he dropped.

Another lunged over his body and hurled his club at Harley's head. Harley dropped to the ground and the heavy bludgeon missed his skull by a fraction. Before he raised his gun again the savages were on him. The gun was torn from his hand and his arms were pinioned helplessly by a dozen powerful hands. Struggling desperately he was hauled roughly to his feet. He felt thin ropes biting into his wrists and arms.

From the blackness behind the powerful light he heard again the light mocking laugh. One of the savages stepped before him and raised a club over his head. Harley fought to jerk away but the hands that held him were like steel claws. He watched in helpless desperation as the thickly muscled savage raised the club slowly to a striking position.

There was no expression of anger or vindictiveness on the savage's face. His features were set in expressionless, stoic lines that were somehow more terrible than any grimace of rage could possibly have been. The man was an executioner, doing his job without sentiment or emotion.

Harley twisted his head away and found Johnny's eyes. The lanky blond was similarly held and another savage was standing over him with raised club.

"So long," he shouted. He tried to smile but he knew the effort wasn't very successful.

Johnny said, "Adios, amigo, this looks like it." He grinned. "I told you we wouldn't make it. You should've gotten rid of me like I said."

The savages were ready to strike. Their arms were tensely knotted, when suddenly a light, clear voice rang out across the clearing.

"Stop!"

THE word was spoken in Spanish and its effect on the savages was instantaneous. Their arms dropped to their sides and they faced the opposite side of the clearing, bowing their heads to the ground.

And then a girl stepped out of the darkness; and Harley felt sure he was dreaming. She was silhouetted in the glare of the light and her figure was tall, regal and commanding. An impressive, beaded headdress accentuated her height. Her face was in the shadows cast by the light, but her eyes shone with the luster of rare pearls. She was

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a creature from a dream or another world. Slim bands of gold adorned her wrists and ankles and a gleaming, triple-strand of gems sparkled about her neck.

She spoke in Spanish to the savages holding the flyers.

Johnny twisted toward Harley.

"What's she sayin'? You picked up some of this language, didn't you?"

Harley nodded. "She is telling them not to hurt us, to escort us to the Sacred Golden Temple."

"What's that?"

"I don't know," Harley said, "but it's a break for a while. Maybe things aren't as bad as they look."

The savages shoved the two flyers toward the blackness that surrounded the clearing; the tall, regal figure of the girl moved from the glare of the light and disappeared. A second later the light switched off and the darkness rushed into the clearing again.

"Johnny," Harley called, as he was led along a narrow trail.

"Yeah?" Johnny's voice came from about twenty feet ahead in the darkness.

"Are you okay? How's your leg?"

Johnny laughed without humor.

"Not much I can do about it now," he said. "This seems to be an infantry division we're in."

Harley didn't answer. There was nothing to say. He continued to put one foot in front of another. His arms were still bound tightly behind him and the backlash of the low branches whipped painfully across his unprotected face; but there was nothing he could do about that. He set his jaw and kept going. . . .

THE first orange streaks of dawn were mottling the sky when the party came to a halt. Harley was almost blind with pain and fatigue, but his weary mind was spinning with a dozen speculations.

Who were these savages? And why had they captured two American flyers?

He remembered the definitely German voice that had been directing things from the blackness of the forest and a frown deepened on his face. There were no Nazis in this area . . . Or were there? And the girl . . .

What possible explanation could there be for her presence here?

The party had halted at the top of a slight incline that led to a broad deep valley surrounded by high mountain peaks. And as the shadowy darkness of early dawn lifted and Harley was able to make out details, he forgot, for a while the mystery surrounding his capture.

In the center of the valley was a huge circular stockade with one high massive gate. A scraggly road led from the top of the incline to this gate. Beside the stockade walls were irregular rows of stunted corn and several patches of dirt that looked like an attempt at gardening.

Over the wall there was visible one building—a majestic spire that rose almost a hundred feet in the air. There was no sign of life, and the silence of the valley was broken only by an occasional rattle of stones from one of the surrounding peaks.

And yet the savages who stood rigidly at his side seemed to be waiting some sign from the stockade before descending the winding road that led to the gate.

Harley glanced ahead at Johnny.

"How're you making out?" he called.

Johnny looked over his shoulder and forced a weary grin to his face.

"The first ten miles were tough. After that I just didn't give a damn."

"How's your leg?"

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"Okay."

"This looks like the end of the line," Harley said.

"What're we waiting for?"

Harley shrugged. "No telling. I could use a bed and some food pretty soon."

"I'll settle for the food," Johnny said.

Their stoic captors paid no attention to their conversation. They remained at attention, arms folded across their chests in attitudes of stony indifference.

After the wait had stretched on about ten minutes, the savages started down the path to the stockade herding the two flyers ahead of them.

The gate swung slowly open as they approached. Inside the stockade Harley saw a dozen or so brown-skinned men and women standing in front of crude little huts. Children, wild-haired and bright-eyed, peered at them around the legs of the silently watching men and women. Harley was struck with the physical perfection of the tribe, and the defiant, fearless intelligence that gleamed from their dark eyes.

Ahead of them in the center of the stockade was the building which had been visible from the top of the hill. It was a square stone structure, ornately ornamented with gilt paintings and designs. A short flight of smooth stone steps led to a wide door in the center of the building.

THEIR captors led them up this flight of stairs and into the shadowy interior of the building. Harley's eyes focused after a moment and he glanced around. They were in a square hall with a domed, lattice-work roof through which the first pale rays of the sun were slanting.

In the center of the room was a squat throne of highly polished wood that gleamed like ebony in the shadowy light. Behind this throne a flight of steps led to a stone altar. And as Harley's eyes traveled up these steps an involuntary gasp of astonishment escaped his lips.

For on the raised altar was the statue of a man, fully eight feet tall, with hands outspread in a gesture of supplication. The figure had been sculptured by a master hand. There was a classic calmness in the features that reminded Harley of examples of Grecian art he had seen in American museums . . . And the proportions of the man's body, nude except for a skirt that hung to the middle of his thighs, were magnificient.

But it was not these things that caused Harley's heart to beat faster. It was something else.

The statue gleamed with vivid luster where the sun's rays touched it, filling the room with lambent, golden reflections.

Harley heard Johnny's quick breathing beside him. He glanced at him and saw that he was staring at the majestic statue with open-mouthed amazement.

"Judas Priest!" he whispered. "I've never seen anything like that in my life." His arm nudged Harley. "Look at that thing, guy. Solid gold, or I'm a Kentucky hill-billy."

"I don't think you are," Harley said with a shake of his head. "It looks like the McCoy to me. But it couldn't be! It'd be worth millions if it was."

Suddenly there was a stir among their captors as they shifted their gaze slightly to the left of the immense golden statue.

Harley followed their movement instinctively. The tall regally beautiful girl he had seen in the clearing was standing beside the throne and studying him with calm, expressionless eyes. At her side was a slim, gray-haired man wearing a white suit. The man's cold hard features were faintly mocking and

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there was a shadowy smile hovering about his thin lips.

The eyes of the dozen or so savages who had brought them to this place, were centered on the girl and the expressions on their lean faces were almost worshipful. They ignored the man in the white suit.

Harley studied the girl as she walked slowly to the front of the altar, bowed her head to the golden statue and then ascended the steps and sat down. She faced the American flyers, her eyes cool and impassive against the light tan of her cheeks. The man remained beside the throne chair without moving and his hard face was like a cynical mask, hiding his emotions.

"Permit me to welcome you to our little retreat," the man murmured with a smile. His voice was almost a whisper, but there was an unmistakeable guttural sound in its tone. Harley wondered if this could have been the German whose voice gave the commands to the savages in the clearing. The white-suited man moved his lips to speak again but the girl silenced him with an imperious gesture of her hand.

The man inclined his head slightly to her with an air of deference, but there was no mistaking the annoyed flush that crept into his cheeks.

THE GIRL studied the American flyers for a moment in silence. There was no animosity in her gaze. She might have been examining an insect that had aroused her curiosity for a moment. Harley felt himself flushing with anger at the cold, deliberate quality of her scrutiny.

But despite his smouldering anger, his mind registered the girl's exquisite beauty with a thrill of excitement. She had removed the towering headdress she had worn in the clearing and her black hair fell back from her high forehead in sweeping natural waves to her shoulders. Her eyes were wide and clear against the soft tan of her skin and her lips were the color of a ripe cherry. She wore a dark cloak over her shoulders and a skirt that fell to her knees. Her bare legs were as slim and lithe as a young boy's. Gold-beaded slippers encased her narrow, delicately arched feet and they were held in place by leather thongs that wrapped around her slender ankles.

Johnny whistled softly through his teeth.

"I'd let her capture me any day in the week," he murmured.

The girl's level gaze moved to Johnny for an instant and then back to Harley.

"I do not understand your tongue," she said, speaking in an odd stilted Castillian Spanish that Harley translated with difficulty. "But," she added, "I do not like the implications in your comrade's voice and manner."

"What did she say?" Johnny asked.

"She's spotted the wolf hair under your sheep's clothing," Harley said, "and she doesn't like it. Stop staring at her legs."

"A prude, eh?" muttered Johnny.

The man in the white suit stepped to the girl's side and murmured a few words in her ear. She nodded, and he turned to the flyers.

"The Princess Zania," he said, speaking to them in English with a German accent, "has graciously consented to let me explain your situation here. However, before I begin, I think you might be more comfortable with your arms free."

He motioned to the savages at the sides of the flyers and they seemed to understand his meaning, for one of them stepped forward and cut the leather thongs that bound their arms. Harley rubbed his wrists gratefully and

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winced as the returning blood sent electric tingles through his cramped arms.

"Thanks," he said dryly. "Now maybe you'll tell us why you ordered us captured." He had a pretty good idea why the German had ordered their capture, but he hoped to find out as much as he could without committing himself.

"That's rather an obvious question," the German smiled. "You were captured because the Princess Zania has an understandable aversion to allowing enemies to circulate in her domain."

"Enemies?" Harley said. "What gave her the idea that we're enemies?"

"I think," the German smiled, "that I may take credit for the development of that idea in Princess Zania's mind. You see, I explained to her the ambitions of the Allied Nations regarding her territory and also the completely ruthless methods they would use in advancing those ambitions. With the result that the good Princess is willing to do what I suggest in eradicating such vermin from the face of the globe."

"I see," Harley said grimly. "I presume, then, you're an agent of Nazi Germany."

"That is correct," the German said quietly. "I am here with several associates on a matter of grave importance to *der Fuehrer*."

"And you're feeding these people the same lies you spread in Poland, Greece, France and Austria," Harley said bitterly. "I suppose you told her what loyal Indians the Nazis are and how generous you're going to be to them after you've installed the New Order in their country."

"These people are not Indians; they are a last remnant of the Aztecs," the German said with a smile. "Otherwise, your summation is correct."

"What do you want with us?" Johnny demanded.

"You, my young friends, are simply victims of circumstances," the German said. "One of Princess Zania's scouts reported the crash of your plane and I decided it might be unwise to allow American airmen to be at liberty in this vicinity. The chances are unlikely that you could cause me any trouble, dead or alive, but I wish to be cautious. Now with you safely under my—ah—protection, there is no possibility that you will cause trouble."

"Well, you seem to be running the show," Harley said with a shrug. "What are you going to do with us?"

"I intend to put you where you will do no harm for a while," the German said. "When my work here is completed you will be led into the jungle and released."

HE TURNED from them and spoke several low words to the girl. She nodded and gestured sharply to the savages who stood guard beside the flyers.

The men closed in on Harley and Johnny and led them through a side door into the open courtyard that surrounded the square building. Several ragged children ran screaming at the sight of the Americans.

Harley glanced at Johnny.

"Our smooth friend, *Herr* Krauthead, seems to have done his work well," he said.

They were led toward the rear of the stockade and ushered into a small stone building. The door slammed behind them and they heard the sound of wooden bars falling into place. Johnny tried the door and found it securely locked. He grinned wryly at Harley.

"We seem to be in for the duration," he said.

They inspected their small cell. One barred window, a foot square, looked

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on the stockade. The only other opening was the door. There were two bundles of rags on the floor that evidently served as beds. That was all.

Johnny sat down on the floor and stretched his injured leg before him with a grateful sigh.

"That feels better," he said. "What the hell do you make of this mess, Harley."

"I don't know any more than you do. The Nazis evidently have some reason for sending men into this area but for what I can't imagine." He frowned and began pacing the narrow confines of the cell, too excited to sit down and rest.

"It can't be aerial reconnaissance," he said. "If that were the explanation, there'd be planes and a field here. What a handful of men expect to do here is more than I can figure out."

"Maybe they just want to work up the natives against us," Johnny suggested.

"If that's the reason they've succeeded beautifully," Harley grunted. "The Princess Zania certainly isn't on our side, that's for sure."

Johnny sighed and closed his eyes.

"Gosh, what an ally she'd make," he murmured.

"You'd better forget about her good looks if you want to keep yours," Harley advised. "Instead, you'd better be worrying about how we can get the hell out of here."

Johnny shrugged. "Why worry about that? You heard the guy say he'd let us go when they finished their job here."

"I've heard that Germans say a lot of things they don't mean," Harley said. "So I'm not believing this one. He'd turn us loose in the jungle, sure! Without food or water and five hundred miles from either—if we're lucky. More probably they'd leave us lying in the trail with a bullet in our head. No! If we're going to get out of this mess we've got to do it an our own, or not at all."

"I suppose you're right," Johnny said soberly. "But have you got any ideas how we'll do it? These are stone walls, you know. We can't just blow 'em down."

"We'll have to wait for a break," Harley said. "In the meantime, let's get some sleep."

"Now you're talking," Johnny said. "And if they're goin' to kill us, I hope it isn't going to be by starvation."

THEY slept most of the day. When they awoke it was dark and they were both weak with hunger.

"Maybe it is going to be by starvation," Johnny groaned.

They heard a fumbling outside and a moment later the door swung open and one of the natives entered, carrying a heavy bowl of steaming food.

He set it down on the floor and motioned them to eat.

Johnny crawled forward enthusiastically, without waiting for a second invitation. Harley stood up slowly and walked toward the food. His path took him directly past the native who was standing in the center of the room.

He didn't glance at the native.

"How is it?" he asked.

"Wonderful," Johnny said. He was sampling the food with a heavy wooden spoon. "It's stew, just like mother used to make."

"Fine," Harley said.

He took one quick glance at the guard as he sauntered across the floor. This was their break! The guard was watching Johnny eat, paying no attention to Harley. And the door of the cell was standing slightly ajar.

When he was within a few feet of the native Harley suddenly shifted his

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weight to the balls of his feet and swung savagely at the man's jaw.

The native was taken by surprise. Dazed from the blow, he raised his arms slowly and opened his mouth to cry out. Harley cursed his weakness. The man should have gone down and stayed down, but the punch had lacked steam.

He stepped in again, hooked his left into the native's body and then crossed with his right. Every ounce of his weight and strength was behind the blow. If it didn't do the job their chance was gone.

Johnny was staring at the scene with his mouth open. The wooden spoon had fallen from his hand into the stew, but he didn't seem to notice.

The native was toppling backward, eyes glazing. He hit the floor, rolled over and lay still. Harley watched his motionless body for a moment, then snapped to Johnny:

"On your feet! We're leaving!"

Johnny was already on his feet.

"Right in the middle of my first meal in forty-eight hours, this has to happen," he moaned. "Why couldn't you have waited a few minutes?"

"This is our break," Harley said grimly. "We may never get another. Let's go!"

"Okay, Poppa," Johnny said. "I'm with you."

Harley stepped quickly to the door, shoved it open. He took a cautious look up and down, but the interior of the stockade was black. There was no sign of movement or life from the neighboring huts.

"Come on," he whispered to Johnny, and together they stepped through the door onto the hard-packed earth of the stockade.

"Where to?" Johnny asked.

Harley listened to the stillness for a moment, trying to make up his mind. One course seemed as good as the next.

"Let's try for the gate," he said, his mouth close to Johnny's ear.

Johnny squeezed his arm in answer. They started away from the stone cell, but before they covered six feet, a low, mocking laugh broke the stillness.

THE two flyers froze, and Harley suddenly realized with sickening clearness that they'd stumbled into a trap. Everything had been too easy!

They heard a click in the darkness and instantly they were caught in the powerful glare of a spotlight. The brilliant light almost blinded them. Helpless, they blinked against the light.

"You poor foolish young men!" The German's voice, coming from behind the spotlight sounded almost sad. "I wanted to see if you were going to be sensible, and you have given me a very definite answer. I am afraid I shall have to be more severe with you."

Johnny suddenly stepped away from Harley's side, his fists clenched at his sides. There was a wild look of rage on his face.

"All right, you yellow-livered murderer, shoot us and get it over." He started toward the light with slow, deliberate strides. "Or haven't you got enough guts to shoot?"

"Stand where you are!" The German's voice was crisply sharp.

"Johnny!" Harley snapped. "Come back here, you crazy fool!"

"I want to see this lying rat face to face," Johnny snarled, "Then let him shoot me."

He continued toward the light without a break in his stride.

There was a click from behind the light.

"I have cocked my gun," the German said. "If you take another step, I shoot."

"Go ahead and shoot, I'm comin'

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ahead," Johnny said, and his voice almost quiet.

Harley waited for another instant and then he lunged after Johnny. Things happened too quickly then for his brain to register. He heard a sharp crack and then another. Johnny continued walking, but something had happened to his leg. His hands moved mechanically to his chest where two bright red stains were slowly spreading. He stumbled and coughed, but he continued walking.

Harley reached his side in two strides, but before he could move to touch him, three of the brown natives sprang out of the darkness and lunged at him.

He swung madly at them with both fists and one went down spitting teeth from his bleeding mouth, but the other two grabbed his arms and hurled him to the ground. He saw Johnny stumble and fall and then a swinging club flashed into his range of vision. He tried to duck, but he was pinned helplessly to the ground. Something like a howitzer shell exploded in his head and he blacked out. . . .

WHEN he came to he was lying in absolute blackness. His arms and legs were unbound, but his head ached with a steady dullness.

He remembered Johnny then and he sat up, feeling an almost intolerable sense of grief and bitterness overwhelm him. He pressed his face and his hands and a convulsive shudder went through his body. Johnny! The crazy redhead with the easy grin and the ever-ready wise-crack, the heart as big as a basketball, was dead.

He rose slowly to his feet and found his hands were clenching and unclenching with murderous rage. The German with the soft smooth voice who had shot Johnny down in cold blood was still alive. And Harley was still alive. But he knew one of them would be dead before this thing was settled. He made a vow to that.

"I'll get him, Johnny," he whispered bitterly into the darkness. "I'll get him."

He was still standing in the darkness when he heard the bars on the outside of the door lifted cautiously. He backed quickly against the far wall and held his breath and the door opened with a slow protesting creak.

There was the shadowy outline of human form framed in the blackness of the doorway. Harley watched tensely as the figure stepped softly into the room and closed the door.

Then he moved forward like a cat. His hands were spread as he moved closer to the dark shadow just inside the door. And when the figure moved away from the door he sprang forward and whipped one hand over the intruder's mouth.

The figure in his arm thrashed wildly and Harley let out an astonished breath as he felt soft warm flesh under his hands. There was a subtle perfume in his nostrils from the long smooth arm that brushed his cheek. He removed his hand and an angry voice whispered in Spanish:

"Quiet, you fool! You will spoil everything. I am here as a friend. You must believe me."

Harley's arms fell to his sides in amazement. The girl he had attacked was the Princess Zania! But his astonishment was only temporary. This visit might be just another trick. He jerked her close to him and his fingers dug into her soft arms.

"You're lying," he said harshly.

The girl made no struggle. Her weight was passive against his body.

"You are hurting me," she said quietly.

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THERE was something in the firmness of her voice that caused Harley's fingers to loosen slowly on her arms. This might be some deception, but if it was it didn't make sense to the flyer. And there would be no point in having the girl risk her own safety to bait a trap. He could kill her with one twist of his hands before she could make an outcry.

"Why are you here?" he asked.

"Speak quietly," the girl said, and there was an undercurrent of urgency in her words. "These men have lied to me. They are not friends; they are enemies."

"You're changing your mind in an awful hurry," Harley said.

"I know. I have been blind. They are here to steal *El Dorado.* I know this now. I was suspicious, but I have played into their hands. And when I saw them shoot down your unarmed comrade I knew that such men did not deserve to be called men, They are inhuman animals."

"What did you say about them stealing El Dorado?" Harley asked.

"El Dorado, the Golden Man. You saw his statue in the shrine," the girl said breathlessly. Do you remember the legend of El Dorado? When Cortez, the Spaniard, came here centuries ago to plunder and pillage our lands, the wise men lured him away from our cities with the tale of a golden man, who lived deep in the wilds of the jungle. The cupidity of the Spaniards was keen, and they set out in search of El Dorado. They found, instead, death, in the depths of the jungle. Our cities were saved and the wise men decreed that a shrine should be built to celebrate the legend. You have seen the shrine. When the Germans came here several months ago they told me that your country was planning to steal El Dorado, but they offered to help me move the statue to a place of hiding, as a gesture of friendship. I accepted their offer. Now I know their purpose was to gain for themselves the statue of El Dorado. But they will never succeed. There is a legend that El Dorado will crush anyone who seeks to desecrate his shrine. That is the curse of El Dorado. But I will not need the curse of El Dorado!" The girl's voice hardened and Harley felt her body stiffen. "The curse of Zania will be enough. My warriors are waiting my signal to kill the Germans the moment they make their attempt to steal El Dorado."

Harley felt his heart beating faster as he listened to the girl. If she were a liar, she was a magnificent one.

"And why have you come to me?" he asked.

"Because," the girl said simply, "I have wronged you. It is my fault that your brave comrade lies dead this moment. I thought you would like to help me now against our common enemy."

"I'll help you," Harley said softly, because he didn't trust his voice. "Show me what I can do."

"Come with me," the girl said.

HARLEY followed her from the stone prison. There was a pale crescent of moon in the sky, but drifting clouds obscured its light. The stockade was dark. The girl led him quickly to the building that housed the statue of El Dorado. She opened a door and stepped into its dark interior. Harley followed her cautiously.

The door closed behind him and suddenly a gun was jammed hard against his back. A German voice said, "Do not move as you value your life."

There was a movement in the darkness, and then he heard a muffled cry and the sounds of vicious scuffling.

"You little hell-cat!" a voice grated.

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There was the sickening echo of a blow on soft flesh and the sound of the struggling ceased. A moment later there was the scratch of a match, and then a feeble light cut through the darkness.

Harley saw the white-suited German holding the flickering match and staring down with satisfaction at the crumpled body of the Princess Zania.

Another man stood at his side pointing a gun at Harley. And there was the gun in his back. That made three.

"Little fool," the white-suited German muttered viciously as he stared at the body on the floor. He put bloody fingers to his mouth and sucked them tenderly. "Almost bit my finger off."

He paid no attention to Harley, but lit a thick candle and stuck it in a niche in the wall. It cast a flickering illumination over the room.

He turned to Harley then and frowned thoughtfully.

"You've caused a lot of trouble, young man, but you won't much longer," he said.

Harley noticed over his shoulder that a scaffolding had been built against the statue of El Dorado and a clumsy block and tackle rigged into position.

He shrugged. "You can't blame me for fighting for life, can you?" he said. "You've won and that's that. You're even going to get your little toy statue, it looks like."

The German's eyes narrowed suspiciously, then he glanced down at the unconscious figure of the girl and smiled.

"She told you, eh? I wondered when she was finally going to realize that our motives were not completely altruistic. Yes, as you say, I'm going to get the little toy statue. All the arrangements have been made. We came here to get it and we didn't fail. It was quite a long chance we took in tracing down a legend as flimsy as that of El Dorado, but it will pay off well. Germany needs gold to meet its obligations on the continent. El Dorado will make a wonderful addition to our reserve supply."

Harley put his hands in his pockets and smiled.

"Just how do you intend to get it out of here?" he drawled. "Do you think the natives will help you after the way you've treated their Princess?"

"I think they will co-operate." The German smiled. "If they don't what has happened to their princess will be but a prelude to—ah—more unpleasant things. They will behave."

He gestured sharply to the man behind Harley.

"Watch him carefully while we take the statue down from the altar."

WITH his third companion beside him he mounted the steps that led to the statue. While he was making an arrangement on the ropes that led to the block and tackle, the girl stirred and raised herself on one elbow. There was a dark bruise on her cheek where the German had struck her. She watched in mute helplessness as the white-suited German prepared to lower the statue to the floor.

There was no warning for what happened next. Without a sound, without an instant's warning, the heavy statue twisted slowly and began to fall. The ropes that an instant before had held it securely broke with a snap and with the terrible momentum of hundreds of pounds of dead weight behind it, the huge golden statue plunged from the altar.

There was no time for the Germans to move.

Harley heard a scream of maniacal terror that he knew would live with

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him until death, as the ponderous statue hurtled downward, crushing the two Germans beneath its weight like the foot of a giant on an ant.

From behind him he heard a choking gasp of horror, and the gun wavered against his back for an instant. He hurled himself to his knees, spinning as he dropped. The German fired once over his head and then Harley lunged forward driving his shoulder into the man's knees. He went down with a crash and the gun slipped from his fingers. Harley clawed at him until he found his throat. . . .

THE boat was waiting at the river bank, manned by two of the stalwart Aztecs and stocked with supplies for a five-day trip. Harley turned to Zania for the last time as he prepared to step over its low side. He looked rested and fresh; his clothes were clean, and the cuts on his face from the jungle branches had healed. It was four weeks later.

"For the last time," he said, trying to smile, "won't you come with me?"

The girl shook her head simply, but there was something deeper than pain in her eyes.

"I must stay," she said. "I have an obligation here."

"To your people?"

"To El Dorado. He saved us as the legend promised. He crushed those who sought to violate his shrine. I must stay and keep his memory green with my people."

Harley said nothing else. He climbed into the boat and soon the swift strong strokes of the rowers had propelled it to mid-stream. He looked back, then, and saw that Zania was standing on the bank, watching him.

She was still watching when the tiny boat disappeared around the bend.

THE END

« « SCIENTIFIC ODDITIES » »

By LYNN STANDISH

THE War Department has announced the adoption of another compact food for the servicemen. This is a tiny tablet that looks like an aspirin, weighs about the same, and has a like ability to disintegrate in either hot or cold liquids. It has solved a perplexing problem for the Army's food scientists.

Most of the Army's cakes, pastries, and puddings need a dash of vanilla to give them a distinctly delicious flavor. But imports of vanilla beans have been cut off and the flavoring is now scarce and expensive. In addition, the pure extract contains 40 per cent alcohol—which is classified as a critical substance. So, the Quartermaster Corps got to work.

Accordingly, their subsistence experts several months ago launched a special study with the full cooperation of the food industry, which has resulted in development of the new tablets. These new "pills" are made for overseas use only.

Each pill is imitation vanilla, composed of lactose, corn starch, vanillin, and artificial color, among other ingredients. This mixture is dried, then pressed into tablet form. One tablet, weighing about five grains, is the equivalent of a teaspoonful of pure vanilla extract.

The complete box contains 192 tablets and is the equivalent of a quart of liquid vanilla. This is a special container, about half as long as a pencil, covered with a fiber box shaped like a cocoa can. The container is weatherproof and provides protection against light rays and insects. It requires 60 per cent less shipping space than the glass container previously used for the extract.

The tablets are so remarkably compressed that they will not break in transit, even with rough handling. All in all, their practical features, especially the fact that they will dissolve immediately in hot or cold liquids, facilitates their immediate use in the mess cook's mixing bowl.

* * *

OF INTEREST to the mathematically-minded individual is the following background material. People often wonder how our ancestors did their calculations. What systems did they use?

One interesting question is: how did the ancient Romans add, subtract, multiply, and divide with Roman numerals?

Roman numerals, it is known, are generally clumsy figures with which to work. It has long

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been somewhat of a popular mystery how the Romans performed the four primary operations with these clumsy symbols.

The fact is the Romans had no convenient symbols to indicate mathematical processes and operations. They had no plus sign, no minus sign, no "times" sign, and no symbol for the division operation. Originally every process and operation was expressed in words of full length. Their mathematical calculations were never simplified further than to abbreviate centum, 100, to C; mille, 1000, to M, and so on.

Thus, in the time of Caesar, figuring was awkward business. Practically all calculations were performed on the abacus, an apparatus resembling the Chinese "suan pan" or the bead-and-frame affairs now used in kindergarten work.

The Roman abacus contained seven long and seven short rods or bars. There were four beads on each of the long bars and one on the short ones. The beads on the short bars stood for five. The first long bar was marked I, the second X, the third C, and so on up to millions. There were additional bars for making calculations involving fractions.

Let us see how Caesar performed a typical abacus task. Suppose he wished to write the number 25. He would push up the V-bead and two I-beads, leaving the two X-beads where they were.

The Romans were not reputed to be good mathematicians and they contributed little to the science.

* * *

YOU probably know already that people in other parts of the world have substitutes for our kiss. The Eskimo, it is shown, rubs noses with his sweetheart. Much less known, perhaps, but nevertheless present—and amusing (to us)—are the other patterns of emotions, as expressed by people as human as we are, but who live in a different society.

Among the Andaman Islanders and the Maori of New Zealand, there is a free and plentiful shedding of tears when friends meet after a separation, or when two warring factions make peace.

The Japanese answer with a smirk the reproof of a superior.

The Chinese have set up whole volumes of rules and regulations for the proper expression of grief in bereavement. This is an important section of their *Book of Rites*, labeled "the technique of the mourning ceremonial." In another Chinese book, *Required Studies for Women*, the following careful advice is given: "If your father or mother is sick, do not be far from his or her bed. Taste all the medicine yourself. Pray to your god for his or her health. If anything unfortunate happens, cry bitterly." While attending the sick, Chinese women are further advised: "Do not let your teeth be seen when you smile, and do not show your unhappiness easily."

Many references are made in Chinese literature, also, to the fact that people may die of anger. In one particular book was the passage: "His anger has risen so that he is ill of it and lies upon his bed and his life cannot long be assured." One traveler cites the case of a Chinese who died of anger after losing a lawsuit!

These observations convince us of the commanding part that experience plays in the patterning of emotions. Emotional expression, then, is not completely a fact or of natural endowment. Who knows, but that in some part of the world, you would cry bitterly when told that you had won the Sweepstakes!

* * *

WHAT person hasn't cursed the waste of time caused by paint which is slow to dry? During these days, time is more essential a factor than ever before, and, as usual, American ingenuity has started the elimination of this troublesome bottleneck.

Research chemists in the paint field have announced the development of several new time-saving methods and materials so necessary in spurring war production. These are the outgrowth of long study of the problem of speeding up mass production by developing fast-drying finishes.

Du Pont has announced a revolutionary development—the short-bake synthetic finishes of the urea-formaldehyde resin variety. This resin has long been used in plastics, but it has continuously resisted efforts to make it suitable for paint. The main drawback was its brittle character. Today, however, research seems to have defeated the old obstacles, and industry is already turning out a multitude of its vital products with this new finish which is baked dry in a short time.

Another advance in the paint field has been developed by the same laboratories that produced the quick-drying "Duco" nitrocellulose lacquer which made possible the mass production of automobiles and put the sparkling white "Dulux" synthetic resin enamel on 9,000,000 refrigerator cabinets. They perfected a type of synthetic resin enamel as a camouflage finish for airplanes. This synthetic product was first adopted by the British government and is now used largely by the United States Army and Navy Air Corps. Its power lies in the fact that it does not rely on imported resins and gums.

These fast-drying qualities are typical of synthetic finishes, but the "Dulux" camouflage paint for planes is, in addition, highly resistant to the destructive action of de-icing fluids. The many ill-spared hours on the ground repairing the havoc raised by fluids spread on plane wings to prevent dangerous ice formation, then, can be avoided.

☆ ☆ ☆ BUY MORE BONDS! ☆ ☆ ☆

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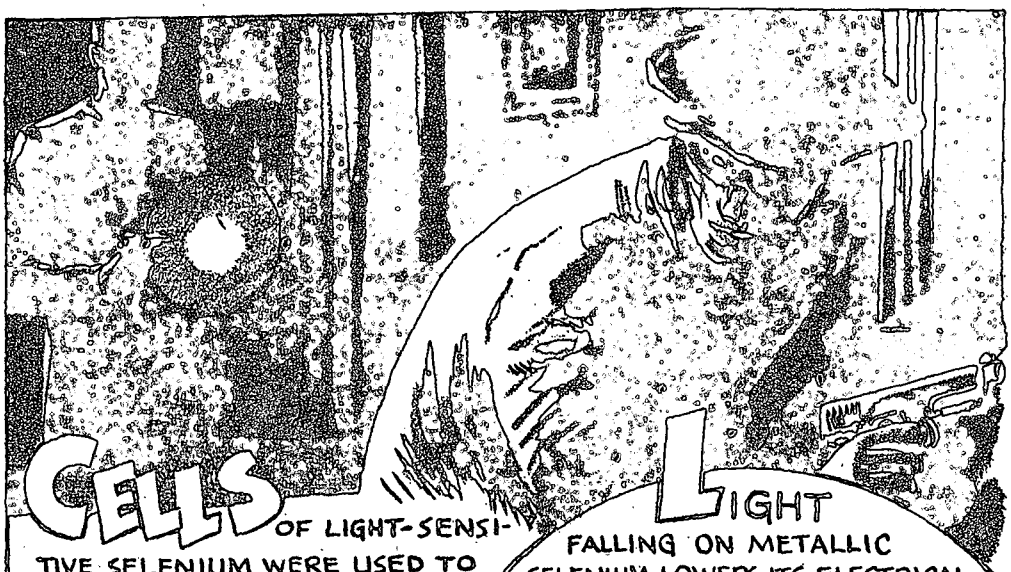
ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS

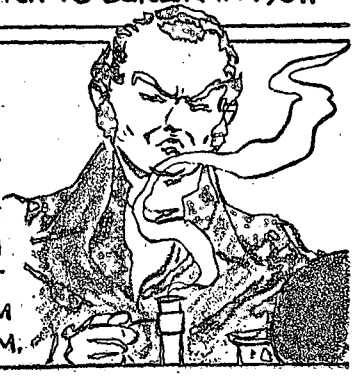


CELLS OF LIGHT-SENSITIVE SELENIUM WERE USED TO MEASURE STARLIGHT INTENSITY 52 YEARS AGO. EARLY PHOTO-ELECTRIC EXPERIMENTS IN THE FIELDS OF TALKING PICTURES AND TELEVISION OWE MUCH TO THIS ELEMENT. AN IMPORTANT MODERN SELENIUM USE IS IN FIRE AND BURGLAR ALARMS.

LIGHT FALLING ON METALLIC SELENIUM LOWERS ITS ELECTRICAL RESISTANCE! WILLOUGHBY SMITH FOUND THAT OUT WHEN IN 1873 HE HOOKED UP SEVERAL SELENIUM BARS, SEALED IN GLASS TUBES, TO PROVIDE RESISTANCE IN HIS SYSTEM OF SIGNALING AND TESTING DURING THE SUBMERSION OF A SUBMARINE CABLE. TO GET EFFICIENT RESISTANCE, HE HAD TO SHUT UP THE BARS IN A TIGHTLY CLOSED, LIGHT-PROOF BOX!

AS EARLY AS 1880, ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL ACTUALLY TRANSMITTED SPEECH OVER A BEAM OF LIGHT WITH THE HELP OF SELENIUM! KORN USED IT TO "WIRE" A PICTURE FROM MUNICH TO BERLIN IN 1907.

SELENIUM WAS ACCIDENTALLY DISCOVERED IN 1817 BY BERZELIUS AND GAHN WHO WERE LOOKING FOR TELLURIUM IN A RED PULVERIZED SUBSTANCE THAT COLLECTED IN THE LEAD CHAMBERS OF A SULPHURIC ACID PLANT AT GRIPSHOLM, SWEDEN. WHEN BERZELIUS HEATED THE SUBSTANCE, HE GOT WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS A TYPICAL TELLURIUM "ROTTEN RADISH" ODOR—BUT NO TELLURIUM.



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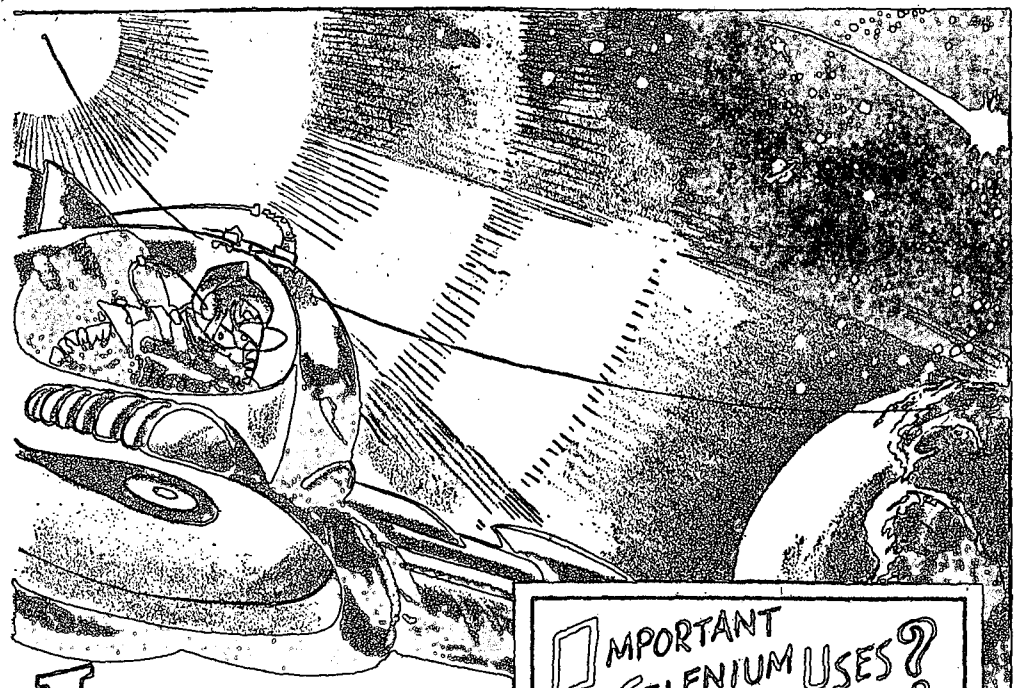
SELENIUM By GORDON McLEAN & ROD RUTH



IT WOULD TAKE A WIRE REACHING FROM THE EARTH TO THE SUN TO PROVIDE THE INSULATION GIVEN BY A TINY PIECE OF AMORPHOUS SELENIUM.

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SELENIUM is number 34 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is Se. Its atomic weight is 79.2. It has six isotopes ranging in atomic weight from 74 to 80. It exists in several allotropic forms, four of which are definitely crystalline. The red crystalline A and B forms have a melting point of 180° C. The density is 4.45. Gray A is a poor conductor, whereas Gray B is a good conductor. Gray B has a metallic lustre and is malleable. This latter form is a non-conductor in the dark, basis of the selenium cell, the photophone, and the photometer.

(NEXT ISSUE: The Romance of Lithium)

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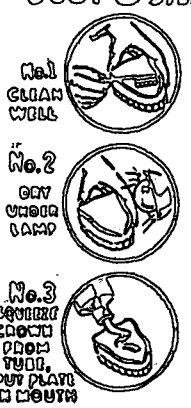

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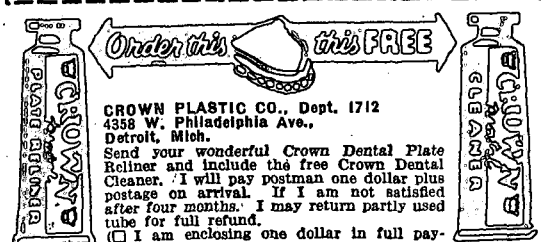

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READER'S PAGE

ENTERTAINMENT

Sirs:

I am writing this letter to tell you that I have never enjoyed a book as much as I do FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. There has never been a story published in it so far that I have ever found dull. Every month I look forward to getting a new issue. This book has been the only one I have ever found that could offer such relaxation and enjoyment. I have read many of your books and I think that the following authors are the most outstanding and the ones whose stories I look for in every issue:—Nelson S. Bond, Robert Block, Tarelton Fiske, Lee Francis, William P. McGivern, Leroy Yerxa, and David Wright O'Brien.

May this book be published forever for the public's entertainment and mine.

Robert S. Broadman
651 West 171 Street
New York 32, N. Y.

The editors appreciate your extremely kind comments, and we hope your last wish comes true at least as far as mathematically possible!—Ed.

CORRECTION

Sirs:

I've been meaning to write to you for a long time. When I say "you," I mean the magazines you represent. When I was younger, I read fairy tales, now I read FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and *Amazing Stories.* I have read *Mammoth Detective* a few times and like it very much. One of your readers recently complained about being ashamed to be caught reading F.A. or A.S.. I wouldn't care who knew I read the stories if I could only get a hold of them. I've tried and tried, but I can't find a store selling them. Just where are they sold in Cincinnati?

I've been reading your magazines for about a year now. I go to second hand magazine stores and snoop about trying to find back issues. Nelson Bond is my favorite author. "When Freeman Shall Stand" was one of his finest works in my opinion. I would like to know if it's possible to get the second chapters of two of his serials, "Sons of the Deluge," and "Gods of the Jungle." Please try to bring Bond back. I miss his work, and I guess I'm not the only one who does.

Among the other authors I like Wilcox, McGivern, O'Brien, Bloch, Burroughs, Yerxa and a lot more. Your new writers are doing fine, but I wish you could bring back the old favorites.

Most of your artists are swell, but some of them stink. If I don't throw many brickbats today, it isn't because I think everything is perfect! If I don't like an artist or a story, I seem to forget them. I never forget the masters like Robert Fuqua, H. Gibson Jones, H. W. McCauley, Magarian, Krupa, and St. John. Ordinary, I don't like Rod Ruth's work, but his cover on the February '44 issue was something to remember. Let him do more covers and plenty of inside work. McCauley's covers are swell, but his inside work is extra-special. His drawings seem to glow, or something like that. If you want illustrations done detail, Magarian is the one you want. Please don't ever print a Burroughs story without a St. John illustration. They go together like bread and butter or peaches and cream. I want to be an artist myself, so don't be surprised if I send you a drawing some day.

Beatrice Mahffey
1616 Walnut St.
Cincinnati, Ohio

Our magazines are sold at all the leading newsstands in Cincinnati; possibly all copies were sold out, which is very much the case these paper-shortage days. Why not subscribe, and thus be sure of your copy? We do have back copies containing the chapters you want. Just write our circulation department. We have a correction to make. Rod Ruth did not do the cover you mention. That was a mistake. Robert Gibson Jones was the artist who painted the Feb. '44 cover.—Ed.

THEY CERTAINLY DO!

Sirs:

I hope this letter finds itself in print but I doubt it. Just recently I came across science-fiction. I dug up everything available on the subject and of course I came upon FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and it has been my favorite mag since (naturally).

My favorite authors are Don Wilcox, Robert Bloch, Leroy Yerxa, William P. McGivern. I like Robert Gibson Jones best in the way of art. I read in your Feb. Reader's Page (it should be Reader's Mind cause they really speak 'em) where someone accuses Robert's Lefty Feep of being strictly corn; the only corn is the corn juice he's all wet in. What happened to "Warriors of Other Worlds?" Do you know where I could get a copy of the "New Adam?"

Bill Jones
123 Ida
Wichita, Kansas

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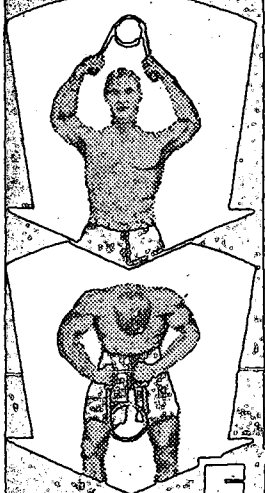

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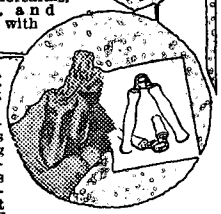

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Yes, the readers certainly speak their minds! And we appreciate it. "Warriors of Other Worlds" will appear again. We vary our back covers so as not to become hackneyed. "New Adam" is out of print. Perhaps a reader has one for sale. Will any reader who has, drop this fellow a line?—Ed.

EARTHIANITY

Sirs:

When Hugo Gernsback started out with a scientific fiction magazine in 1926, there appeared a number of stories dealing with planetary governments and interplanetary wars. And the idea which I have termed Earthianity began to develop.

During these early years when the idea of a world government appeared in some of the stories, perhaps vague in the allusion as to just what such a government would be like, nevertheless, the idea of a realm composed of all the people of the world was forming.

At that time, no one ever thought of connecting the Earthian idea with political science. These stories in which the idea of planetary government was alluded to, were for the purpose of entertainment, and were thought of as fantasy. Nevertheless the awakening of the people was taking place.

It was in the summer of the year 1936, some time after I had been promulgating a plan for a world-state which I later abandoned, that I began to see that there was indeed a realm without boundaries which occupied the entire earth. This I later termed the World Supernation.

Such magazines as FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and *Amazing Stories* reach some of the people which a treatise of political science would never reach. Such stories as have appeared in these magazines have contributed something to the Earthianization of the people reading them.

Nowadays, when there are so many peace plans being formulated, people have a better idea of what a world government would be like, than they had during the days when Gernsback started out, or even I had when working on my abandoned world-state plan during 1934-1936.

For many years I read Gernsback's magazines, and those of his successors, and they no doubt helped in the sowing of the seed of Earthianity.

Willkie has told the people in his book, what writers in their fantastic way were telling years back in scientific fiction,—that there is one world. But the great significance of this fact did not appear at once.

I know that scientific fiction will continue helping in Earthianization.

Martel I. Miskey
700 Hall of Records
Los Angeles 12, Calif.

It is true that when the future our writers tell about comes true, and other planets take their place as habitable places, that world states seem

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much more possible than today. Perhaps it will all come about some day.—Ed.

OUT OF PRINT

Sirs:

I am a fairly new fan of your magazine and enjoy it very much.

In your latest issue I came across a letter to the editor that mentioned several novels printed by you in 1926-30. The stories I refer to are "Moon Pool," "Skylark" and "White Lily."

I have heard these stories mentioned before and I'm sure there are many fans who would welcome the opportunity to read these stories again or for the first time as in my case. Have you ever considered reprinting these stories?

If there are no immediate plans for reprinting these "classics" I wonder if you could help me find some old copies of your magazine that contain these stories. Thank you very much.

Art Owen
6050 42nd St.
Seattle 6, Wn.

We don't have back issues containing the novels you mention. Perhaps after the war we will reprint them and other classics.—Ed.

CAN ANYONE HELP HIM!

Sirs:

For several years I have been a reader of your magazines. Some may think it odd that a Minister would take time to read science fiction. However, despite the fact that I have my B.A. and Master's degrees and will soon have my Ph.D., I greatly enjoy reading FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and *Amazing Stories*. This type of reading furnishes me with many pleasant hours of relaxation, which form a contrast to the heavier type of reading material which is a part of my regular reading diet.

I am especially interested in the works of Mr. Edgar Rice Burroughs of Tarzana, California. I have ALL of his published books, including several foreign editions. I also have the major portion of his stories in their original magazine form. In addition to the above I have a special collection of all the book jackets from Burroughs' books arranged in a special E.R. Burroughs scrap book. I notice that so many of your readers are interested in this author and that is why I would appreciate deeply your publishing this letter. To complete my collection I need the following:

1) Several Burroughs First Editions published by A. C. McClurg and E. R. Burroughs, Inc., Publishers.
2) The July 1927 issue of *Amazing Stories* containing "The Master-Mind of Mars."
3) A number of the older magazine stories of Burroughs; especially back-numbers of *All Story Magazine, All Story Weekly, Argosy All Story Weekly, All Story Cavalier, New Story*

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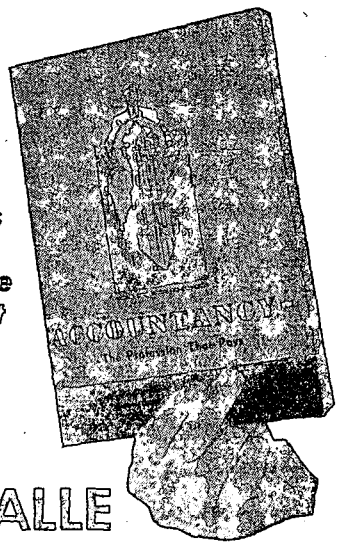

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Magazine, All Around Magazine, The Munsey, Thrilling Adventures, Blue Book, and Red Book.

4) A copy of *The New York Evening World* (a N. Y. Newspaper, now out of business) for Oct. 1915 containing Burroughs' story "Ben, King of Beasts."

5) Two Burroughs books for children: "The Tarzan Twins," 1927 and "Tarzan and the Tarzan Twins with Jad-Bal-Ja the Golden Lion," 1936, a Big-big book published by Whitman.

6) Book Jackets from Burroughs books.

7) Any Tarzan Big Little books or Tarzan comics.

8) A. L. Burt reprints of the early Burroughs books.

9) E. R. Burroughs Foreign Editions.

I also have quite a bit of Burroughs material that I will sell or trade. If any of you readers have any of the above material, or could give information as to how I might secure it, please let me hear from you at your earliest convenience.

I am still looking forward to the balance of the John Carter of Mars series of which "Skeleton Men of Jupiter" was the first. When will you print the next story and how many stories are in this series? Incidently *Mr. J. Allen St. John* is one of the very best illustrators.

Rev. Darrell C. Richardson
Ormsby Village
Anchorage, Kentucky

No more from Burroughs till after the war. He is now a war correspondent.—Ed.

WE'LL DO IT

Sirs:

Nearly a year ago today I happened to be in a newsroom and as I was casually glancing over the shelves, I noticed a mag with a lurid cover featuring a half-nude blonde. Needless to say this was my rather discouraging introduction to science fiction.

Safely in my room with this horror, I sat down and began to read, and I didn't stop until I had finished. After that I spent much time running around buying all the magazines in sight and borrowing all the back issues I could.

Most of the first stories I read I liked. Later I began to have definite preferences. Now, I am sorry to say I like, really like, very few.

Wandering dazedly through the hodge-podge of authors and artists I even learned which were my favorites. Now, considering myself as a real SF fan, I have some advice to give you.

You, dear sir, evidently refuse to realize that most of your readers have been fans for a comparatively short time. So, when we read about all the "best stories ever published" and the arguments the old timers have in the Reader's Page, we are infected with an insatiable curiousity to read some of these stories. Can you honestly blame us? Instead of spending so much time being fair to the authors, spend some time being fair

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to the readers. How about it? It seems though it would be a nice new leaf to turn over during the coming year. By the way in spite of your obvious faults, I selected you to write to because it quite obviously (again I repeat myself) is the *best.*

Norman Ruggles
Riceville, Pa.

So many requests can't be ignored. When conditions permit, we'll give you the old classics again, in some special form or other.—Ed.

TRUE (?)

Sirs.

I am a fighter pilot in the Army Air Force—and I have just finished reading the story "Letter to the Editor." Now, Mr. Palmer—ol' boy,—I am going overseas soon and as you no doubt know a pilot must have nothing on his mind to bother him. I want to know definitely—is this story and the footnote by you, TRUE? Please answer by return post and tell me really, IS IT? You know I can't be hurling myself around Italian skies looking for Nazis and wondering if Mr. R. A. Palmer is still beating off peculiar fellows in plastic buttons.

Lt. F. L. Crisman
Tampa, Florida

Being a sane man, we naturally believe this to be a joke played on us by some author, who decided (wisely) to withhold his identity after he learned about the goose-egg and the button. We definitely will murder him if we find him. But actual *time travel? Frankly, we can't say no, but we would rather! You know as much about it as we!—Ed.*

KIDNAPER CONFESSES

Sirs:

I drew my scarf tighter about my throat to keep out the chill of the winter day. As I neared the corner, I pulled my hat farther down on my forehead—

Be calm, I told myself again and again. No one would suspect me—

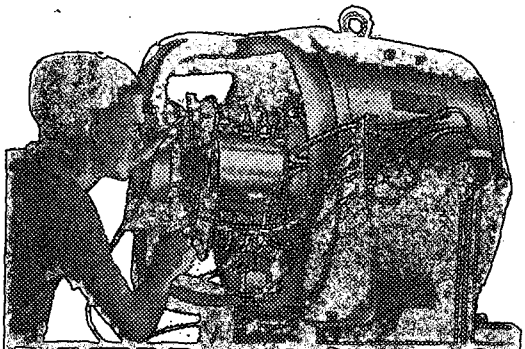
I prayed over and over that she would be there this time. But of course she would, because her sister had told me she would be—

I slackened my rather brisk pace as I rounded the corner and stepped into the brightly lighted doorway.

Suddenly I froze (the O.P.A. had nothing to do with it). There were hundreds of men, women, and children crowding, shoving, surging back and forth before me.

Betrayed! And by the one man I thought I could trust. But wait— Maybe there was still a chance.

I dashed up to the nearest cop, and using him as a shield, made my way safely through the crowd. I suppose the fact that I had his gun pointed toward the crowd had something to do



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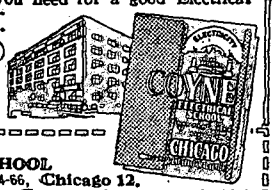

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with their willingness.

Then turning the gun on the man I had trusted, I said, "What have you done with her, you dirty rat?"

"I didn't double-cross you, boss," stammered the man. "She's in there just like I said." He pointed to a closet. He then threw open the door and stepped aside.

I could hardly believe my eyes, but it was true. There she was.

Suddenly realizing what would happen when the first shock of seeing her wore off the crowd, I threw the policeman aside, and hurled myself forward. Grabbing her frantically, I clutched her to my breast. At last my fondest hopes had come true.

Sobbing with uncontrollable joy, I jumped, still holding my loved one in my arms, to the top of a counter so I could shout to the whole world.

"At last, at last," I babbled crazily, "she's mine, all mine, do you hear?"

Then leaping across the bodies of the dead and dying who were piled thick in the doorway (For what was there left to live for? Hadn't I just snatched the last copy of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES?), I ran into the street with the wailing mob on my heels. Turning into a dark alley I climbed to my room via a rope made of torn sheets. No one must see me. I then indulged in the most wonderful literature and artwork known today.

I close, gentlemen, with a parting invitation. Come up and see me some time. Visiting days are Mondays and Fridays from 2 o'clock to 3.

Dwight Lane
Box 152-B
Black Mtn., N. C.

Why don't you subscribe and avoid all this trouble?—Ed.

ONE MORE NOTCH, MR. "A FAN!"

Sirs:

The Reader (or ex-reader?) who signed his letter "A Fan" (ha! ha!) really got me mad. So F.A. is only for 4 to 12 year oldsters, eh? Well, it so happens, I'm 13 and I have a reading grade of high school age.

R. Christensen
1870 E. 33 St.
Brooklyn, N. Y.

We got many letters like yours, ranging from your 13 to 73!—Ed.

ADAM LINK AND LANCELOT BIGGS

Sirs:

I have read your mag since the first issue appeared. It was my first taste of science fiction and, lest we forget, fantasy (that will make you happy Ed.). I can truthfully say that I always enjoy the majority of your stories. Lately, however, your two best characters have been missing. I refer to ADAM LINK and LANCELOT BIGGS. Please persuade Binder and Bond to continue them.

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As to the December issue, Yerxa turned out two excellent stories. Keep it up. The only two that I didn't like were "Professor Cyclone" and "The Wooden Ham."

Two suggestions: More cartoons, maybe a Gifford, huh? and (here I pick up the torch from Joe heh-heh Kennedy) TRIMMED EDGES. Hoping for a better FANTASTIC.

James Andrews
12031 Edgewater Dr.
Lakewood 7, Ohio

Eando Binder is at work on another Adam Link, he tells us. Bond is very busy doing a war-show for radio as his contribution to the war effort—but he'll be back. Cartoons seem to have been hit hard by the draft, or something!—Ed.

PRICE LIST

Sirs:

In the Reader's Page in the February '44 issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES I spied a letter by one Vida C. Schneider. This esteemed fan asks, in no uncertain terms, what makes stf, and pulps in general, so horrible to the non-fan. That, Reader Schneider, is a question which fans and editors alike have been trying to solve for quite a while. Some of the many reasons are: a) Glaring covers with BEM'S, 90% nude screaming females. b) The low quality of some of the early publications (and some of today's, too!).

This, Fan Schneider, should answer your question in part. C. Oliver, M. Lesser, and maybe even V. R. Heiner will complete it for you.

A short glance at the fiction line-up:

At this writing, I have only read "Lefty Feep's Arabian Nightmare" and the "Letter to the Editor." Come now, Ed? Are you kidding about that last story? I really don't know what to think of you.

Here's a suggestion: Why not bind all the Life on Other Worlds, Cities of Other Worlds, Transportation of Other Worlds, and Warriors of Other Worlds into a booklet, and sell it for 25 to 50c. This would be ideal for fans like me who missed some of them.

Glad to see that W. West made a come-back.

Well, now that we have waded through the preliminaries. I can safely tell you that my real purpose in writing this letter was to obtain a price list of all copies of AS and FA available, giving date, cost, and, if possible, title of lead story.

Arthur Oesterreicher
241 W. Olive St.
Long Beach, N. Y.

We have asked the circulation department to supply us with a list of back issues still available, and prices. We will publish this in the next issue for the convenience of those many readers who have recently inquired. Thanks for your suggestion—maybe we'll work something out later. As for our covers being 90% nude screaming females,

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we heartily disagree. In fact, show us just one!—Ed.

CLUE TO A HOAX

Sirs:

I have just finished reading the February issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and I want to compliment you on a very good issue. But the main reason I decided to write you a letter was to point out to you the one glaring mistake in "A Letter to the Editor." The machine which predicted the date of one's death was supposed to do so by measuring the amount of electricity left in a person. Yet this machine predicted the date of the "Time Traveler's" death as several years in the past. No machine would know whether a man would die in the past or the future it would merely measure electricity.

If it were not for this mistake I would almost have believed your little story. Did you know this was just a fake, or did someone really play a practical joke on you? I would greatly like to know the answer to these questions so please answer this letter.

M. B. Trehus
Spring Grove, Minnesota.

We hope it was a hoax, and yet, it was a rather drastic way to perpetrate one, don't you think? Your fault in the logic of the machine is very interesting to us.—Ed.

A SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB?

Sirs:

Being a scientifiction fan myself for about 3 years, I think I know whereof I speak when I write this letter. Now I don't know how many scientifiction fans there are in the United States but it appears to me that nine-tenths of them would like to own a library of scientifiction classics. Sure, magazines reprint old classics but even magazines get old and dusty and have to be thrown away. What scientifiction readers would like would be a permanent library of scientifiction classics. Now here is my suggestion:

With all the book clubs in America, it is amazing that no one has ever thought of having a scientifiction book club. Supposing Ziff-Davis formed a book club where each month a new classic of scientifiction or fantasy would be released. People who join this club would have to take a certain number of books a year. You yourself have said that you could get classics for one-tenth their original price and it seems to me you could easily publish these books in attractive binding and sell them to members of the book club for about $1.00 or $1.50. If you will only take a poll among your readers, you will find that everything I have said in this letter is absolutely correct.

Manfred Baskin
1213 Farwell Ave.
Chicago, Ill.

Well, readers, how many of you would like to join such a book club?—Ed.

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YOUR EDITOR IS PLEASED

Sirs:

After a succession of several dull issues, which were inadequate to say the least, the February FA stands out like an orchid in a patch of skunkweed.

Top yarn this trip was David Wright O'Brien's "The Place Is Familiar"—one of the best of the rather vast DWO output. Mr. O'Brien has written some splendid stuff, along with a number of distinct flops, and I'm glad to see that you chose one of his more notable efforts for his farewell appearance.

West's return to fantasy, "Outlaw Queen of Venus," was very well done, but newcomer Lee Francis kinda edged him out for the runner-up spot in my humble opinion. "Appointment With The Past" was plenty okay. If only a few more of your newer authors were gems like Francis instead of comparative mudballs. . . .

Yerxa once more grasps eagerly for the coveted last place spot and makes it with ease. Bravo!

The front cover was quite well done, but it looks like it belongs on some other magazine. Save for the wings on the horse, it would have fitted very well on VIOLENT NORTHWESTERN FABLES, or somesuch. Suggested title for the painting: "Queen of the Royal Mounted."

The back cover was good, but I don't care for the idea of having it illustrate a story. Have the artist dream up a new series—perhaps J. Allen St. John with "Wildlife of Other Worlds" or somesuch. Ah, youth and its everlasting optimism.

Finlay is first as usual on the interiors, with McCauley and Fuqua trailing.

The reader's corner was long enough for once, and definitely on the good side, especially Mr. Foster's interesting definitions.

In conclusion, a bit of that which drives editors to drink and insane asylums—suggestions. What say we desert the monotonous female on the cover once every hundred issues or so . . . if Yerxa must write, have him write some of his good stuff instead of corn . . . feature St. John more—he is a real artist and gets far too little credit for his work . . . instead of a batch of worthless shorts, get Patton to write another novel like "Doorway to Hell."

Chad Oliver
3956 Ledgewood
Cincinnati, Ohio

Your editor, as is his wont when enthused, made a remark to his staff that "The Place Is Familiar" would rank first in the issue, and better, rank as one of the best, if not the best, of David Wright O'Brien's stories. Thus, in view of the letters we have received, saying just what you said, we are pleased, but definitely! We predict now that it will rank as a minor classic. As for females, we hope to have a McCauley female soon! Ah!!! As for Yerxa, he states he is reserving a special place in a special place for you, and we can't say we blame him, because how can you be so far off the beaten track? Even your editor

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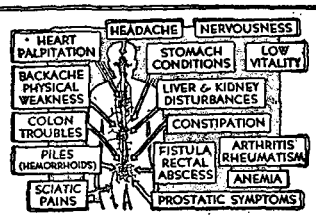

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has been amazed by the way he's come up to gigantic stature. Patton has promised us a good novel for a year and a half! We still have hopes.—Ed.

COVERS TOO FANTASTIC?

Sirs:

Just purchased February ish of FA. First I turned to Southpaw Feep—don't know what I like about him—and then to "Readers Page." I sympathize with V. C. Schneider— You say 3,000,000 people read FA, but remember, each one of those 3 million is just one out of a lot more millions who don't. And who look upon these readers as inferiors who *believe* in the stuff they read. I'm not afraid to buy fantastic magazines, but you can just bet that I don't show them to every one I meet and brag about what kind of stories I read. I'm only human. Only thing I've got against the covers is—they're *too* fantastic!! Why not have a more-or-less PLAIN cover? It won't hurt the stories any—will it?

I've only read FA about a year, and I've never written before, but I hasten to defend the old mag: What does "A Fan" know about who reads your magazines? I happen to know the science-fiction readers read not only *your* mags, but also others; also that a few 4-12 yr. olds have learned to appreciate the stuff you print.

P. F. Page
1909 So. Salina St.
Syracuse, N. Y.

It has been our experience that covers sell magazines—simply because they attract attention. The stories are what KEEP those the covers attract. So we'll keep on having covers, more or less fantastic.—Ed.

YES, SHE'S CONVERTED!

Sirs:

Just finished the Feb. issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and must say it was a boost to my cause. (Said cause being to convince my wife that I am not a complete literary moron who lacks any pride at all to be caught reading such matter as FA puts out.) She says I needn't think that if I ever get sick that she would face a clerk, and the embarrassment of purchasing such a book for me. So I read her Vida C. Schneider's letter out of the Readers Page together with ye olde Editor's comment and believe me that helped a lot.

The clerk in the drug store where I bought this issue must have put this mag out in the rack without the proprietor knowing it had come in, for after I had paid my quarter for it and he took a look at the cover I saw a strange look cross his face, a lost look of disappointment. Then I knew I had met another FST fan. He confessed that he swiped all FST mags that came in and read them in the back room and since he only got one copy he was left out this time so not being able to watch anyone suffer I promised to bring the mag back to him.

"Appointment With the Past" by Lee Francis was a likeable and very fantastic story. Oh yes, the most fantastic part reads as follows: "The

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building was on the New Orleans waterfront. . . . He was afraid to get too close to the edge of the wharf. No one would be around if he fell into the bay." That statement is correct. If he fell into a bay on the waterfront in New Orleans no one would be around all right for the waterfront is along the banks of the Mississippi river.

Outlaw Queen of Venus	1.A
What's in a Name	3.A
Place Is Familiar	1.A
Musketeers in Paris	4.F
Letter to Editor	3.A
A Thought in Time	3.A
Appointment	3.A
Lefty Feep	3.A
Features	1.A
Readers page	1.A

P.S. The wife broke down on this issue and is now reading "The Place is Familiar" and laughing. I think I have won at last.

Mel Elliott
Box 292
Weatherford, Okla.

Your wife couldn't have picked a better story to start on—she's a fan now, or we miss our guess. After all, she has the majority on her side—believe it or not, more women read FA than men! Francis admits you are right about the waterfront!—Ed.

BOON TO A FIGHTING SAILOR

Sirs:

I am a sailor aboard ship and in a war torn area. Never before have I expressed myself to any magazine company as to how I admired their work. My first FA magazine reached my hands while I lay on my back sick in a Naval Hospital. On the cover was the picture of "The Ice Queen." From then on I've been a constant fan of FA. I would appreciate very much a copy of reproduction of the picture of the Ice Queen astride her tiger, as it has been haunting me ever since. I'll never forget especially the facial expression, which the artist has so skillfully portrayed.

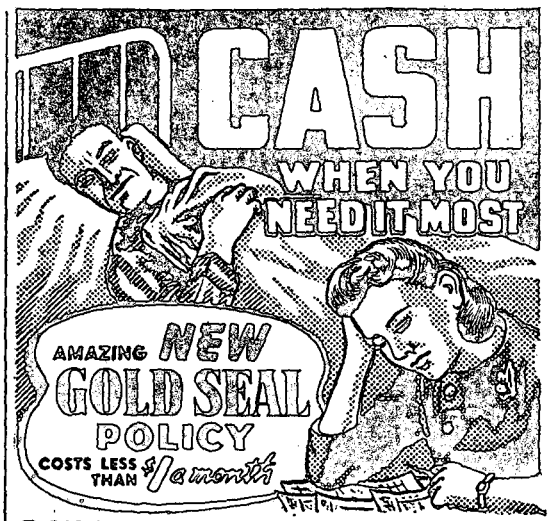
Your magazine is the most unique to me because of the fact that most of the ideas conceived in the stories are amazingly very similar to many of my own. You've got a gold mine in FA. Never let it down. And oh, yes, do try and get a picture suitable for framing of "The Ice Queen," as I'd deeply appreciate it.

Out here on the high seas, the reading of FA is like rain on a desert to me.

Wm. I. Pierson Sl/c
Naval Secret, U.S.A.

Author Wilcox has that cover framed in his home, and we have no other reproductions. However, we are mailing you a good copy of the cover itself which you may be able to frame. Sorry we can't do better. Many thanks for your comments, and we'll keep on giving you all the "rain" we can!

Which ends the Reader's Page for this issue. Lots more coming up next time. We can't print all letters, but we'll print all we can.—Ed.



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JASON—The Superman

By MORRIS J. STEELE

One of the great heroes of ancient legend is Jason, who is credited with feats of strength, cunning, and magic which would shame the Superman of modern day comic-book fame! (See Back Cover)

IRONICAL as it may seem, it was that oft-heard call of the night "family trouble" that made a legendary hero of Jason. The deed which gained him his reputation was forced upon him by his uncle, Pelias, who had high-handed his way to the throne of Iolcus in Thessaly, which rightfully belonged to Jason's father, Aeson, by succession.

It seems that Jason's uncle had two children, Phrixus and Helle, by his wife Nephele, who was the goddess of the clouds. However, like many fathers, he became errant and fell hard for Ino, the daughter of Cadmus. Nephele, in righteous anger, packed up and left, but unlike modern mothers, left her children behind. Ino couldn't stand them, so she persuaded Athamas, by falsifying an oracle, to offer Phrixus as a sacrifice. She predicted a famine, which had to be averted, and then cleverly caused it to happen by the simple process of roasting all the seed grain before it was planted.

The ghost of Nephele came to Phrixus, warning him to escape, and providing a means of escape in the figure of a golden ram which was to swim them across the sea. But Helle fell off and was drowned, giving her name to the Hellespont. Phrixus reached safety, however, and sacrificed the ram (out of gratitude) and hung up its fleece in the grove of Ares, where it was guarded by a dragon which never slept.

Jason's uncle was so mad he wanted the ram's skin, dead or alive, so he ordered Jason to go fetch it. Because there were fifty oars in the ship, *Argo,* Jason took fifty other "heroes" with him. The ship was "radio" equipped, in that it had a special piece of wood installed in the prow that had the power of speaking as an oracle (a contribution to the voyage by Athena).

The argonauts set out, but were sidetracked by a several-month stay at Lemnos, which was inhabited only by women, explainable by the fact that they simply murdered all the men on the island.

Proceeding to the country of the Doliones, first storm beset them, and then the Doliones. Jason killed Cyzious, which gave him the local title. The group added to their laurels when Hercules bested the Hydra; and Polydeuces licked King Amyus' favorite boxer.

Some time later they rescued the blind king, Phineus, from the Harpies, who were constantly polluting his food supply—in return for which he gave them the directions to the Colchis. To get there, they had to pass through two cliffs which had a bad habit of coming together and crushing ships that attempted to pass through. The *Argo* got through with only slight damage to her stern.

Reaching Colchis, the king, Aeetes, turned out to be a hard man to deal with; before he would give up the golden fleece, he exacted several odd jobs from Jason and his men. He asked that his bulls, fire-breathing, bronze-hoofed devils, be harnessed to a plow, and further, be used to plow the field of Ares, which apparently was a hell of stones and boulders. This done, the field was to be sown with dragons teeth from which armed men would spring.

In typical Jason fashion, Jason caused the king's daughter, who was also a sorceress, to fall in love with him; and with witchery, he was able to accomplish the feats. As a reward, he received the fleece, and incidentally carried the king's daughter off with him.

Naturally Aeetes pursued. Medea, the sorceress, delayed the pursuit by dismembering her brother, Absyrtus, and cast his limbs about in the sea for his father to pick up.

After many further adventures, the argonauts' reached Corinth where the *Argo* was placed in a sacred grove. Jason lived there many years with his wife, Medea, then finally put her aside for Glauce, the daughter of the Corinthian king, Creon.

As could be expected, Medea was no less savage in her revenge than in any of her previous acts, although she resorted more to her magic.

She prepared a wedding gift in the form of a robe and headdress. When Glauce put it on, she burst into flame and was consumed in horrible agony. Not satisfied with this, Medea slaughtered her own children by Jason with her own hand.

There are several accounts as to the final death of the hero, one being suicide over remorse and grief at the horrible acts of revenge of Medea; the other being death by being crushed beneath the collapsing poop of the *Argo* to which he retreated sentimentally in his grief. It is possible that both accounts are true, in part and that Jason committed suicide by causing the *Argo* to collapse on top of him.

On our back cover, artist Frank R. Paul has depicted Jason entering into combat with the warriors who have sprung from the dragon's teeth he has just sown.

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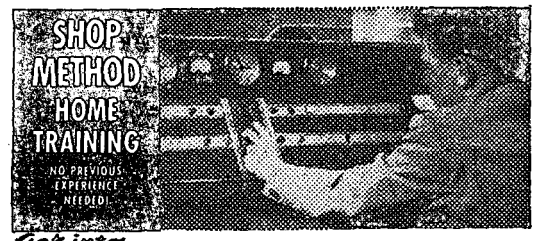

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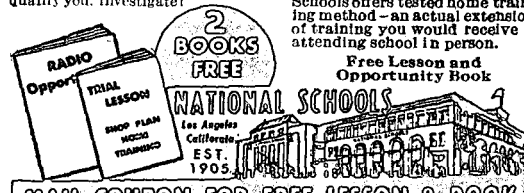

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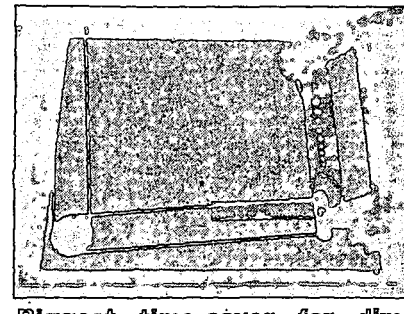

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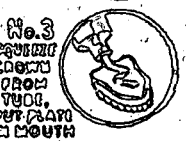

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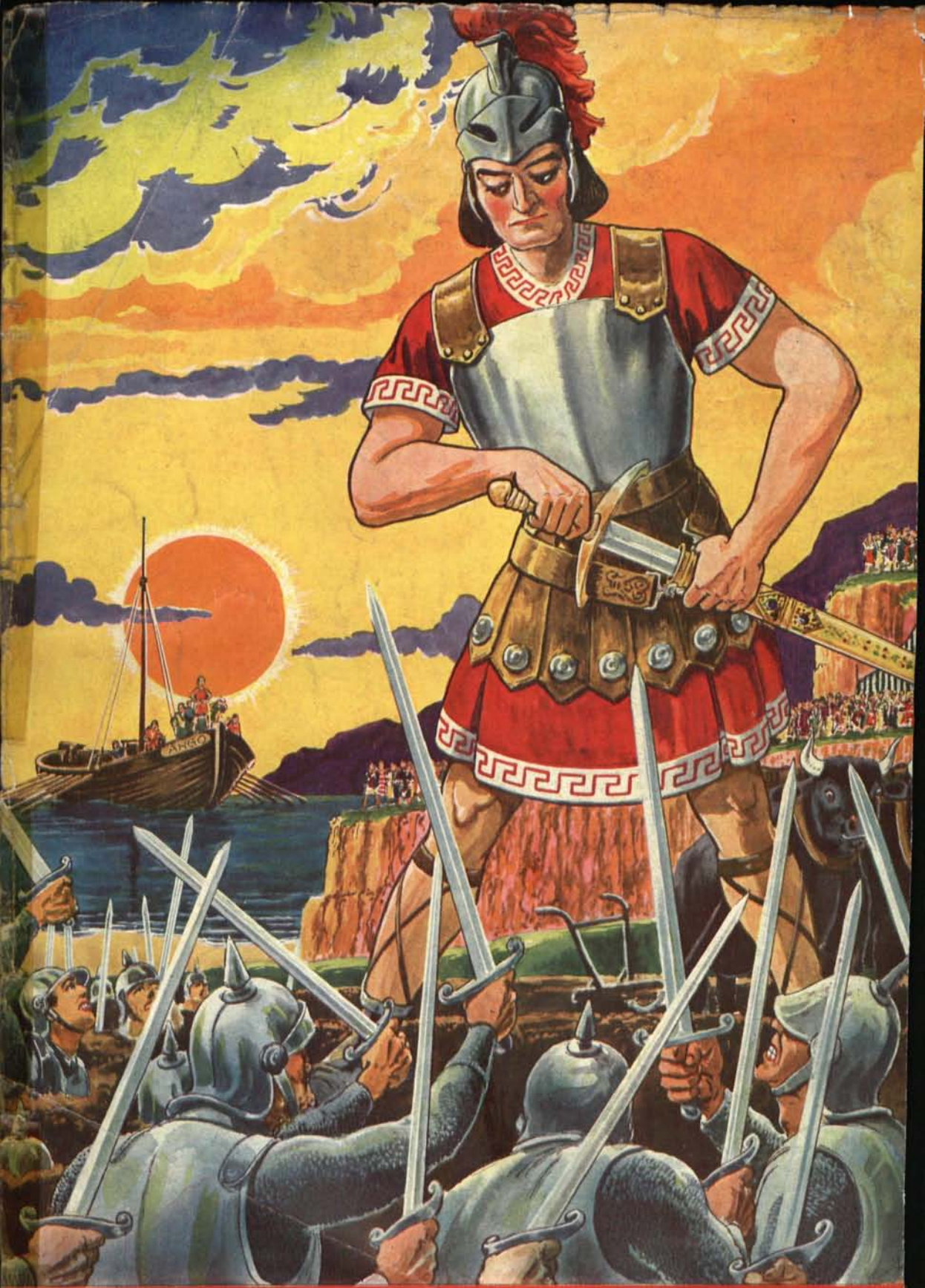

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